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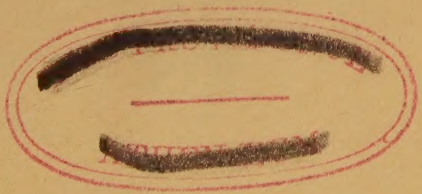
Courtesy of Lord St. I. —— Surrey, England.

Portrait of D. 13

F-L-A-S-H D.13

by

VICTOR K. KALEDIN



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Introduction

UNTIL THE ABDICATION OF THE TZAR, NICHOLAS II IN 1917, D-13 was Assistant Chief of the Personal Court Branch of the Russian Imperial Secret Service, consisting of a small coterie of seven picked men who were intimately known to the Tzar and in whom His Majesty had the utmost confidence, not only for their tested loyalty to him, but for their high patriotism and deep love of Russia, a love and loyalty proven individually before their selection for the personal service of His Majesty.

The Russian Imperial Secret Service consisted of the *Ochrana* or Political Police which was supreme; the Criminal Investigation Department and the City Police. The City Police was practically a separate department and came in touch with the *Ochrana* on rare occasions only. In addition, and supplementary to the *Ochrana,* was the Personal Court Branch, a department inaugurated after the assassination of Alexander II in 1881, and before the coronation of Alexander III, and especially designed for the protec-

tion of the Crown. Its four inter-connected branches, three of which were organized afterward as their need arose, were as follows:

333-R. White Branch
444-S. Political Branch
777-I. Foreign Branch
999-A. Army Branch

The White or personal Court Branch, was ostensibly under the direct supervision of the Tzar, who, however, exercised his power of control only in cases demanding extreme measures. Among several thousand examining magistrates throughout Russia, only seven held individually the coveted title of Examining Magistrate Extraordinary. The "Seven Gray Men" as they were popularly called, included the Tzar and the Chief of the Personal Court Branch, a man whose identity was never known outside the immediate circle of that Branch. This tiny group constituted a Special Tribunal under whose supervision came the investigation of conspiracies against the Autocracy, all cases involving any member of the Imperial entourage, and political situations of extreme delicacy.

The three other branches were under the technical supervision of a person of high rank designated by his

initials N. N. R. These branches were, however, supplementary to and coefficient with the White or Personal Court Branch.

The archives of this entire branch including all four divisions (333-R, 444-S, 777-I, 999-A), unlike the incriminating archives of the *Ochrana* which are now public property in U. S. S. R., escaped the hands of the Bolsheviks. They were burned by order of D-13 and under the personal supervision of four persons; Major General Prince N., Colonel S., Captain B. and Flight Lieutenant the Honorable R., of England.

This hitherto unrecorded event took place November 28, 1919, in Odessa in a house on Pirogovskaya Street. Twenty cases were covered with burlap sacks, soaked with gasolene and smeared with sulphur, axle grease and tar. The floor of the room was covered an inch thick with sulphur and the whole set on fire.

In his own words D-13's childhood on his father's estates in the Ukraine, was a "pampered and pillowed protection." This statement was obviously an exaggeration. If "pampered," then only to the extent of complete freedom to do as he pleased. If "protected," then only to the extent of immunity from the unpleasant consequences of his wild escapades. As for

"pillowed," his muscles were of steel, his endurance phenomenal. In an encounter he was nothing short of a Siberian bear; and it was this quality alone—his own denials to the contrary notwithstanding—that preserved his life on more than a dozen occasions.

His eight years at the Imperial Lyceum of Moscow were apparently uneventful, spent for the most part in gymnastics, fencing, fighting and riding. He must have done some studying though, for at his graduation at the age of nineteen he was among the three firsts. His greatest accomplishments there were the result of his love of languages, ancient and modern, and a serious interest in history. The latter, his study of history, no doubt explains the unusually comprehensive knowledge of Russian affairs which he possessed.

After his graduation he spent several years in England attached to the Russian Embassy; and it was while there that he developed what was no doubt an inherited, or at any rate an inordinate, penchant for curious and not invariably "respectable" adventure. As a result of one of these—evidently more than tolerably outrageous this time—he was "invalided" back to the Ukraine where he was confined by parole to his own estates in the Don region. Six months of this, to him, restricted activity proved the limit of his endur-

ance, and he escaped from Russia for a few weeks in Paris, lengthened by special permission—or without it more probably—into a tour of Europe, Asia and Africa.

A peculiar nostalgia (a thing of a hundred names but born of a single origin—love of his native soil) finally drew him back to Russia. His disillusionment was complete. No longer the careless, rebellious youth but a mature man of the world, six feet two inches in height, strikingly handsome, rich, an aristocrat, he had unlimited opportunities to observe the tendencies of his countrymen, more especially those of his own class. What he saw shocked and appalled him to such a degree that he was torn between renouncing the country of his nativity or throwing himself heart and soul into its rescue. Inevitably for a man of his character the choice was the latter alternative.

His reputation for outrageous and fearless adventure, proceeding not only from his London escapades but also from his experiences in Asia and Africa—experiences no doubt considerably exaggerated, "fictionized" rather, together with his appearance and fabulous wealth, placed him in a kind of limelight, and led to his being selected for one of the most important tasks of the Ministry of War, since the revolution of 1905. It concerned the arrest of a certain international spy,

Antonio Lucca, alias Conte di Bellsanto, alias Maurice Goldstein, whose apprehension saved Russia from armed conflict with a foreign power and in the nick of time.

This matter was handled by D-13 with the utmost discretion, and placed him in the confidence of the highest authorities under the Tzar. But the self-imposed task of running to earth one, "Comrade Boris" a man of a hundred aliases, and unexampled power and influence with the peasants and proletariat, was the adventure which logically forced him into the personal service of his sovereign.

"Comrade Boris" had begun his career as a member of the Political police and using his secret knowledge and training to protect himself had organized a band of anarchists among St. Petersburg's intelligentsia. It was an organization with which the *Ochrana* proved unable to cope. Intrigue, violence and sudden death marked the unparalleled search for the "brains of the anarchy," but without progress until D-13 took up the case. In the Siberian tundra, posing alternately as a deserter from a Cossack regiment, a monk, a "saint," a trader in white slaves, D-13 was trapped by anarchists in a deserted coal mine. Wounded and tortured he finally escaped through an air shaft—a feat which no

one but an athlete could have accomplished—crossed the ice-bound Lake Baikal and, returning with a detachment of Siberian Cossacks, "bombed the pests into Shaman Hell" (his own words). "Comrade Boris" was captured "interrogated," and, as D-13 put it, "mercifully permitted to die."

In connection with the Jewish pogroms in Russia, the work of D-13 is in itself an epitome of his whole career. The friendly relations existing today between the mixed Russian and Jewish population of the Ukraine are largely due to his genius and his thorough understanding of human nature. In fact D-13's first important assignment after his initiation into the Service was in this connection, and resulted in the complete disintegration of the "patriotic" associations which up till that time had carried on their organized butchery unmolested—protected and assisted, indeed, by the Political Police.

When I first knew him (in 1907 to be exact), D-13 was, to my quasi-youthful mind, a hero, a knight errant. His face combined cynicism, humor, bitterness, kindness and potential cruelty; an ever-changing mask of subtlety. The eyes were quizzical yet eagle-like, lips continually moving with quips of acid repartee. Fighting the sins of the Throne and the

hydra-headed monster of Revolution, he was like a master surgeon, probing with the keen scalpel of his extraordinary mind in a desperate if alas vain endeavor to cleanse the festering wounds of his beloved Russia.

And no wonder that he appeared to me colossal, for at that time D-13 was one of the most powerful figures in the Russian Empire—in spite of the fact that the real nature of his labors was known to no one, least of all the sovereign whom he strove so vainly to serve. In conversation he was a cynic. He professed no religion, insisted dogmatically that beauty of character, intellectual integrity, any and all pretense—except hypocritically, of course—to aspirations for higher spiritual attainments were entirely lacking in human nature. Among his associates he was noted as utterly ruthless; merciless to a marked degree, even in a country and in a service where mercy was an all but unknown term. On the other hand he seemed equally to scorn useless or stupid cruelty. His love for his servants and the peasants on his estates, as well as for all animals was profound. His appreciation of the arts was unusual, except oddly enough music, which he pretended to dislike with intensity, while at the same time he was an accomplished musician.

On his personal affairs, that is to say his private

life, I may not expatiate, however full of interest and color it may be—only this: deepest of tragedies and lightest of comedies there clasped hands.

Quite accidentally on the streets of Constantinople I met D-13 after the revolution of 1917 and our flight from the crimson acres of proletarian Russia—U. S. S. R.

As we talked of old times I hinted at the possibility of making a book of his famous cases, a book that would reveal the naked truth lurking in the dust and debris of the Romanoff throne. I met with a flat refusal, anger emphasized with a look of deep pain. We parted—two beggars in rags looking for work among the outcasts of the Galata piers.

Another five years elapsed before I met him again, this time in Paris. We talked interminably of the past. He told me many things I had long wished to hear. Pieced out, filled in, elucidated cases on which we had worked together and of which I had, too often at any rate for my own enjoyment of the work, known but isolated or disconnected parts. In addition he related several other cases in which he had figured alone, that is to say without my assistance or indeed my knowledge. Recalling his attitude at our meeting in Con-

stantinople, I refrained from again suggesting a book of these cases; but a few weeks later I was surprised by the receipt of a much crumpled package containing copies of several letters he had at one time or another written to his American and Russian friends, together with a half hundred odd pages of notes, evidently extracted from an old diary or contemporary record. They were all, letters and notes, written in a blind code varying somewhat in each case, and on several occasions "locked" from six to seven times; veritable Chinese puzzles interspersed with quotations from the Bible and from Russian fairy tales. Clipped to one of the letters I found a penciled note as follows:

"Here you have what you asked for in Constantinople. If you can make head or tail of it use any or all of it at your discretion. Those names which I have deleted are only such as you would yourself refrain from publishing to the world at large. Not for your sake or for mine, but for theirs, since some of them, by the grace of God, still live; sustaining life in whatever manner and under whatever hardships *le bon Dieu* has chosen for them. And of those who are no longer in this world there are sons, daughters and their sons and daughters. *C'est tout, mon vieux.*

D-13."

It is, then, these letters and notes of D-13 which are here presented; elucidated, clarified, made coherent so far as lies in my power, and expurgated only to that degree which the circumstances of their publication to the world imperatively require. Further comment would be superfluous.

VICTOR K. KALEDIN,
(L. X. 11).

"WHITE HOUSE,"
January 10, 1930.
Water Island, L. I.

CASE: M77742—1 and 3
File D. 13: at. cpr. "9" trt. "4"

The Black Angel of the Pogroms

From a Letter of D. 13
To Mrs. S. B. Bromley

FLASH! BZ-Z-Z-Z! DZING!

Code lights, special call, telephone, all going at once. Flash! Bzzz! Dzing! I sprang out of bed and stared uncomprehendingly at mauve walls I had never before seen, furniture that was as strange, and a narrow stained glass window through which the gray dawn was struggling to penetrate. Then I woke up. That is to say, I realized that I had been dreaming. There were no code lights, no special call, no telephone. I was in the "haunted" mauve room of "Raven's Nest," Sasha Stockelberg's thrice mortgaged, draughty, portrait-cursed chateau, near Riga. The venerable "ghost" had been playing tricks, no doubt of it! I swore vigorously.

I was on vacation recovering from the kind ministrations of some gentlemen and a lady—especially the lady—who had evidently mistaken my good intentions toward the Empire for bad ones toward them personally. For they had decided to have my skin, for a souvenir of the encounter. That it (my skin) was

not at that moment adorning whatever altar of sacrifice they had intended it for, was due solely to the fact that my intelligence was not on the same plane with theirs. Nevertheless I had been pretty badly knocked about. Twenty-three men and a lady—especially the lady—are not too easily and painlessly circumvented in a determination as apparently deep-rooted as that of my kind ministrants! But enough. I was on vacation, had been for a fortnight, and was practically recovered, thanks to Sasha's charming wife, the Frau Baronin, whose hospitality was of the kind which one recalls with a positive nostalgia whenever one is a bit done in, either by one's brother man or by life in general—a safe euphemism that, for one's own unmanageable appetites, I fancy.

At any rate, it was true of myself. And they—my appetites—were now fully restored. Wide-awake, I knew the folly of attempting to go to sleep again. Breakfast was far off and I was hungry. I dressed, not without difficulty in the intense cold, and making my way down to the kitchens managed to thaw out in the grateful warmth of the huge bread ovens. After three glasses of hot tea with rum, arranged for me by a sleepy baker, I ordered Sasha's silver-belled sledge and pair. A drive through the keen air would give me a

very devil of an appetite, I knew; and a very devil of an appetite, was, I believed, all I wanted to complete my recovery.

The snow was deep but well-packed; and the horses, a perfectly matched pair of Arabians, seemed as keen as I for the drive. Three-quarters of an hour later, on my way back, in a narrow road through the forest, a peasant, bundled and bound round in a heterogeneous collection of old rags and worn furs, stood in the road directly in the path of the horses. He leaped aside barely in time to miss being struck by flying hoofs, as I pulled the beasts to their haunches. Grabbing the bridle of the off horse, he began a tirade of abuse; of me, of Sasha, of our wives and progeny to the third and fourth generations. I raised my whip to cut him across the face, when he shouted a single word at me—a password of the Service! Then coming closer and shaking his fist in my face, he muttered: "The village inn, eleven p. m., go!" I brought the whip down on the horses' flanks and dashed off between a growing crowd of husky peasants armed with all sorts of hastily improvised weapons.

It had been an exhilarating drive, an exhilarating adventure with an exhilarating prospect; "the village inn at eleven!" I raced back to the chateau, skidded

on the ice-covered "lovers' walk," as I swung round for the stables, killed Sasha's pet pig, Fritzchen, which spoiled, a little, my appetite for breakfast—fortunately; for if not spoiled, it might have taxed the resources of even the charming Frau Baronin's hospitality.

I spent the day in suspense and went to bed early, about 10: 30. Then, getting into all the furs I could find, let myself out at a back door and as swiftly as the deep snow would allow, made my way down the long driveway. As I reached the gate, nearly a quarter of a mile from the house, I was concerned to find it unlocked and open. Some animal, a fox probably, yap-yapped sharply, then a shadow crossed the path of light which streamed like a bar of gold from a window in the keeper's lodge. I fingered the butt of my .38, flattened myself in the snow and after a tense moment played my flashlight in a wide circle over a clump of bushes near the wall.

Nerves? *Mais non!* There's a difference between fear and caution, the simple difference between life and death. And shadows are not made by ghosts. I called out. The voice of one of the grooms answered. He had been to the village for vodka and gossip. He advised me not to go out. "The cold——" I gave him an old ruble and told him he had not seen me. Which was

the literal truth—his back always toward me throughout our short colloquy. He asked my will as to the closing of the gate. I did not answer but hurried on stumbling forward in the heavy snow, blown in drifts by a terrific wind which had sprung up since nightfall.

Dark, twisting clouds covered and uncovered the moon, making it difficult to keep to the nearly obliterated road. The roar of the waves beating against the jagged rocks came to me like an ancient dirge, wordless and tragic. Shadows of the torn clouds raced one another across the drifted snow, and in the distance the forest, black and silent, appeared like an army of the dead, frozen upright, in a last stand against the ruthless might of Russian winter. My spirits rose and fell on the uneven rhythm of the crashing waves. I struggled on against the wind—the last man, the sole survivor in a tenantless world!

"Omen! Omen! Omen!" Thus ran my thoughts.

At the inn which I reached a half hour late for my appointment, were a dozen innocuous-looking villagers, all half-drunk and most of them asleep. In a tap room beyond I spied my friend of the morning's encounter. He was alone. I joined him and as I sat down I heard a muttered *"Deus Optimus Maximus!"*

The Chief!

He laughed, and swore volubly. We shook hands, talked of dogs and women. I had three hot rum punches, one after another. We exchanged notes on the quality of German fertilizers needed for potato growing in steppe orchards, a subject of great interest to me and of perfect indifference to him. Two hours passed. The inn was deserted, save for us two and the drowsy boniface. He ordered us to leave. I handed him some money and a scowl. He took the money, gave me back my scowl, and with the shrug of a fatalist went off to his bed.

From a concealed pocket in his leg wrappings, the Chief produced a letter, in code, which was addressed to the Director of Political Police in St. Petersburg. The original had evidently been intercepted since it was not stamped with the seal of the *Ochrana.* My interest was aroused. I took the letter and read:

"To General G., etc., etc.

From the Berditcheff Branch of the Union of the Russian People.

In the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

We, the undersigned, have the honor to report to your Excellency that on May 6, during a Jewish Pogrom in our city, eighty (80) Jews were killed and one hundred and twenty (120) wounded."

It was signed by the president and secretary of the Union, and right across the letter in bold characters Grand Duke Nicholas Nicolaevitch had written: "Investigate activities Political Police throughout Russia, with special reference Jewish Pogroms. My nephew's name must not be linked with the shame of the Empire. The incitement lies elsewhere. Investigate. N. N. R."

It was, then, the Grand Duke himself who had intercepted the letter? I glanced at the Chief. He nodded affirmation of the question in my eyes. I whistled softly. I had, of course, long known—as who did not?—that the Grand Duke Nicholas Nicolaevitch was completely out of sympathy with the Court and all its dangerous and dubious ways. A plain soldier, and with the plain soldier's love of blunt truths and contempt for craft, it was a surprise to discover that he could bring himself to resort to craft. The occasion must indeed be pressing. I said as much.

The Chief's face was hard and drawn; a curious and savage glint lurked in his half-closed eyes. He cursed the Political Police collectively and individually. I said: *"Eh, bien! on travaille.* A few new recruits for Siberia!"

"The only cure," he admitted, cutting the words with a gruff: "*Crêve Dieu!*" Then, conversationally, he outlined the necessary procedure, but with continual reminders that the Political Police did not welcome investigation. I pointed out that one did not advertise one's status while investigating, at the same time indicating his complete disguise. He ignored my obvious hint, born of intense curiosity, since the Chief did not assume roles of this kind except in affairs of the greatest importance. He consented only to explain that his business in the Riga district was successfully concluded; and without further discussion we parted.

Ten months of Ural and Crimea, Volga and the White Sea. *A via dolorosa* you may believe, for a man of my temperament and tastes. I am not a crusader, not an altruist, not a preacher of "brotherly love," but merely a soldier obeying orders. In this instance, a snooper, a buyer of consciences, a betrayer of confidences, a judge, jury and executioner.

I began by putting on weight. There is something disarming in a fat man with a fixed smile. One does not credit him with too much brains. Quietly dressed, spending money freely, anathematizing the liberal

press and the younger generation, I poked my head into the grinding jaws of the Government machine—a rusty machine, lubricated with human blood and fueled with extortion. One does not fight the devil with milk and water, however. Among people who live by extortion, bribery is surest and quickest for result. In this case not crude, but artistic bribery. The kind that starts in a boudoir with just the amount of elegance and golden cadence of voice so popular with provincial Cleopatras of ancient vintage, and ends in a Bureau, with death or disgrace—or both!

Results: A stinking trail of blood, leading directly to the Ministry of the Interior; a crimson mockery of justice, dancing over mile upon mile of freshly dug graves, and defended by the crudest of propaganda, manufactured by the gendarmerie under the tutelage of the Political Police—yet not without a certain ingenuity—a defence and an incitement—two birds hit with one stone. "Mob outrages." "Natural results of the ritual murders conducted by the Rabbis."

One peppery Colonel of the Political Police in South Ukraine openly blamed the massacres on the Jews themselves. His tortuous reasoning involved the theory that among the Jews more deaths resulted in more births. A pogrom, he felt, would offset the un-

restricted childbirth preached in every synagogue. An attempt at self-extermination caused by racial ingratitude to the Crown. A typical Russian explanation by the typical Russian Bureaucrat! Excellent propaganda for consumption by the populace, since having no meaning whatever, any meaning convenient to the moment could be attached to it.

Some of the higher officials, less muddled, but not less guilty, attributed the wave of murder to "political readjustments necessary for the safety of the Empire. Laudable and highly patriotic." The same thing more bluntly put, and irrefutable because at least half-true, acknowledged the criminal means, but justified everything by the psychological effect—"an outlet for the instinctive blood lust inherent in all mankind, and which, in the case of the down-trodden, the oppressed, inevitably took the form of ruthless murder of their oppressors, unless some innocent victims were supplied."

Questioned as to His Majesty's attitude bearing directly on the unmentionable atrocities perpetrated on the Jewish population, the answer was invariably the same:

"We do not trouble His Majesty with details of the pogroms."

As mere irony the reply was a classic, but its implications were crude enough: His Majesty approved the murders but did not care for details! The equivalent of a blank order with His Majesty's signature attached!

My fury grew with each successive experience of this calumny. I began to comprehend Grand Duke Nicholas Nicolaevitch's resort to craft. I grew hard, ruthless as the system I was investigating, fostered, instead of suppressed, my own blood lust. Gold and feminine hands opened the dusty files in seventy-five *ouchastocks* (stations of the Political Police) establishing beyond a doubt the policy of the Ministry of the Interior working hand in hand with the Union of the Russian People and the Black Hundreds—the latter drawn almost wholly from the criminal element of the slums.

It was clear that the thing was too wide-spread and too thoroughly organized to be suppressed by the removal of a few leaders. It was like most of such movements in Russia, a matter which would necessitate discovering the source, then destroying that source or diverting the flow from it to some harmless end, and by any method which appeared to be final. Discovery of a document in the files of the Mayor of a town near the Austrian border presented me with my

first authentic clue. It was an answer from General Nosoff of the Political Police to an anti-Semitic petition and was addressed to "The Mayor and Town Clergy" as follows:

> "I am in direct communication with Odessa Political Police. The Black Angel of the Pogroms countermands the last order received February 6, 1907, in connection Jewish zone and nullifies the Emperor's ukaze concerning same."

One is inclined to think of angels as feminine—an unwarranted assumption to be sure, unless on the grounds of one's experience of men! However, "black" angels—? I was, of course, familiar with the old Russian superstition regarding black angels. According to this belief, they are not devils, but sin—the essence of sin—cruel, refined sin. Blasphemy coated with religion. They were credited by the peasants with hovering over freshly spilled blood, animal or human. Also there was a legend to the effect that black angels appeared to the Romanoff family in times of war and bloodshed, always when some prominent—wholesale, rather—execution of peasants was discussed. No doubt it was with some of this in mind that the "Black Angel of the Pogroms" had assumed the sinister pseudonym.

To impress it on my memory I read the letter again. "Countermands . . . nullifies the Emperor's ukaze . . ." The Black Angel of the Pogroms was, then, among the exalted! Who else could countermand and nullify the Emperor's ukaze?

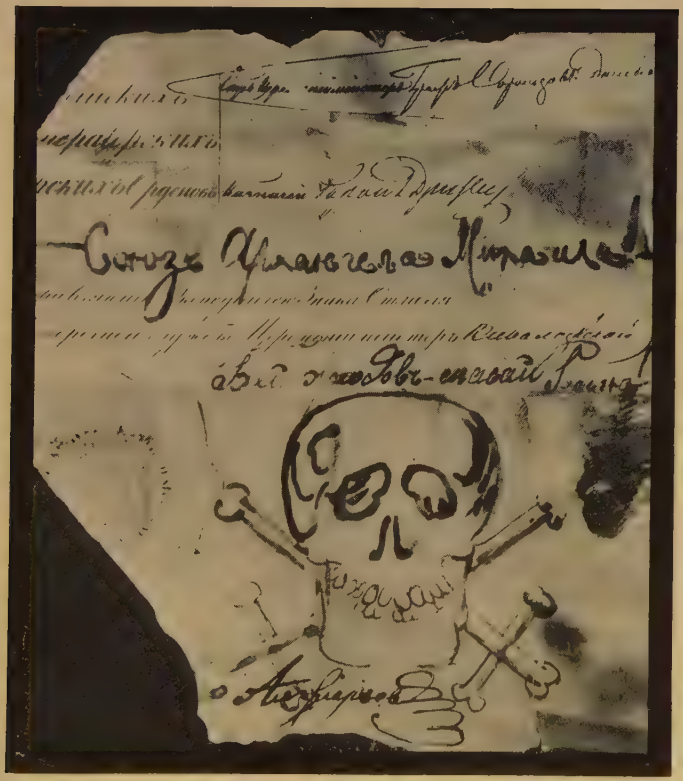
For reasons of my own I kept this information to myself, merely notifying the Chief that I was seriously considering a vacation in Odessa, with a bit of fishing thrown in as a cure for my jagged nerves. His telegraphed reply upset my carefully nursed liver, just recovering from the effects of vodka and over-rich meat pies. And, no wonder!

> "Fishing approved by our health specialist. Am particularly interested in a species called by the natives Black Angel. Double pay. Terms specified by Ministry of Finance. Report luck."

It was evident from this message that the Chief had been at work on the affair and was apparently ahead of his assistant. It was a challenge. Nevertheless, I had my vacation. I fished for the silver-blue *tchechon* in the muddy waters of the Langeron Bay, and cooked my fish in the white tiled kitchen of the Hotel Richelieu. Within ten days I had made friends of the entire kitchen personnel, waiters included. Hotel employees are born gossips. They need little encouragement ex-

cept an occasional bill and a willing though not too eager ear.

I checked my data every night, eliminating by intuition, plus an unusual talent for putting two and two together, the plain hotel news from scraps of valuable information. Finally an item: "Colonel Karl von Felderzam of the Political Police entertained fifty guests at the Café Fanconi at so much per cover—" (amount not ascertained by my informant.) On further investigation this important item was added, and the aggregate amount proved to be considerable; double the month's pay of a colonel of the gendarmerie. A telegram to H. Q. brought Colonel von Felderzam's "pedigree." He was a gendarme of the old school. He had served under two Tzars. When in command of a punitive expedition following the Revolution of 1905 he left a trail of blood wherever he went, ordered hundreds of the intellectuals, Jews and peasants shot and hanged. He was the originator of the three degrees of "interrogation" which consisted of "simple"—that is questioning under threat of torture; "pressure"—questioning under torture; and "extreme" —which was nothing less than its qualifying adjective implies. He was the first commander in Odessa to assume the functions of official censor over the news-



Courtesy of Count O. —— U. S. S. R.

A special Gramota of Alexander I accompanying a high order of the Russian Empire changed into an inciting proclamation by the "Union of the Archangel Michael" conveying an order—"Kill the Jews and save Russia."

papers; a usurpation of authority which left only those journals that approved and advocated his policies with any voice at all. He was eulogized by the Church as a pillar of the Throne.

Posing as a rich landowner from central Russia, I paid for the privilege of meeting the notorious Colonel in his lair, with a substantial donation to the Orphan's Fund, his favorite charity, of which he was honorary chairman and, incidentally, acting treasurer. Soon afterward I gave a party, submitting the list of guests, and accepting with grace his deletions and additions. Champagne, of course, and narcotics, heroin his pet vice—perhaps the least obnoxious.

A newly born liberal journal, commenting on the party called it—or us—"The sweepings of the unclean corridors of intrigue and corruption"—and swept itself into oblivion and its principal editors into jail.

The "Workingmen's Association" held a meeting of protest against the suicide of one of the waitresses, and was disbanded by order of the Political Police.

Gradually, vice for vice, glass for glass, I edged myself into the confidence of this autocratic ruler of Odessa's Political Police. My methods could hardly be called ethical. They were gauged according to the demands of the situation in which I found myself.

Ethics did not figure. It was war, war of the cruelest, the lowest, the very worst character; betrayal—"with a kiss," or with "thirty pieces of silver." I use the phrases symbolically of course, nevertheless neither kisses nor silver nor gold were spared. Men and women were bought, used and discarded, deluded to their ruin or death—often both. It was like searching for a golden nugget in a ton of sand. I was on the edge of blowing out my own brains merely to preserve them from putrid disintegration, when the Chief wired:

> "Attorney-at-law Boris Pelicon resides Odessa. Intimate friend (of) Doctor Dubrovin, President (of the) Union (of the) Russian People, member Union (of) Archangel Michael, Union (of the) Double Headed Eagle. Instructions follow."

They did! Forty pages of closely written code which made me feel the need of a nip of brandy, and another fishing expedition to forget for a while the Service and its hidden brain, the Chief. My vodka and champagne soaked liver cried out against the brandy, and I had no time for fishing; but the latter gave me an idea, at least. When fishing for *tchechon* one uses tiny shreds of decayed meat. The fish swarm about the bait in circles of silver-blue lightning, clearly seen

in the shallow water near the rocks. Decayed meat! It smells, it attracts, it is the ideal bait!

I gave a lecture, well advertised for six days beforehand. "The Ritual Murder of Andrey Youschinsky." A jew named Beiliss was accused of the murder, and acquitted. To quote from one of the liberal Journals, which immediately paid the penalty for its temerity: "All greedy vampires that swoop at night, kill and drink blood and rest at dawn protected by the Crown, attended the lecture." The truth, of course. The Black Hundreds, smelling decayed meat filled the auditorium to twice its normal capacity. They got what they came for. One could not be too extreme for the tastes of such *canaille!* I closed with an exhortation as follows:

"My nephew was murdered in cold blood by an unknown Jew three days before the Passover holidays. I, Stephan Louzgin, challenge the audience to sing our hymn of hate: Save Russia! Kill the Jews!"

They accepted my challence with alacrity, and thundered the fratricidal words till dawn, in the humble streets of the Moldavanka district, thickly populated with Jews. They smashed a few windows, set fire to a shop or two—nothing serious. I paid for the damage willingly enough.

The next evening I entertained a visitor—one, Boris Pelicon, a man with cold blue eyes, a sardonic twist to his lips, unkempt tobacco-stained nails, and the ribbon of the order of St. Stanislaus on the lapel of his coat. We discussed my lecture. He offered his influence and that of the Societies over which he presided, in any undertaking I might wish to finance in furtherance of our mutual interests. I accepted his offer warmly, and introduced von Felderzam's name into the conversation. He said nothing, but his eyes showed dislike. Later I spoke of him to von Felderzam, and saw the same dislike, and a touch of fear. The Colonel was not reticent, however, in fact, he warned me against Pelicon, not as a traitor or even a robber, but as a man devoid of ability and therefore dangerous!

Here at last was "my golden nugget in a ton of sand!" A poor simile perhaps, for the golden nugget lay beyond, but at least I knew where to look for it. I sent for—but why drag a woman's name into the unsavory business? Suffice it, the lady in question skilfully played Pelicon against von Felderzam in a ruthless fight for the control of the various anti-semitic organizations in Odessa, of which The Union of the Archangel Michael was the largest.

In the shortest possible time the fight had become a public scandal, each side claiming to be the mouthpiece of patriotism and accusing the other of treason to the Empire. I waited daily for the Ministry of the Interior to be dragged into the maelstrom. Not till then could I throw my weight into it, and lead or push von Felderzam to his doom. A hundred unlooked for complications arose and had to be met, out of hand, so to speak. The Ministry of the Interior refused to be drawn in, until Boris Pelicon demanded the opportunity to submit his case to the Imperial Council. Then the Minister of the Interior, a man of limited ability but of inordinate vanity, goaded by the Chief's reports and those of his own agents, stepped into the arena insisting upon peace at all costs. Colonel von Felderzam (advised by myself and Admiral N—) openly defied the Ministry.

Blank spaces filled the Russian newspapers day after day. St. Petersburg periodicals were forbidden to publish news which was printed in Odessa, and vice versa. At the same time the six yellow journals controlled by the Black Hundreds, having received substantial sums from an unknown source, openly accused Colonel von Felderzam of having been bought over by the Jewish capitalists and of working for the revolutionary

organizations in Paris, including the *Bund*. The editorials in these papers (written by myself and the lady previously mentioned), demanded utter disregard for political pressure, rigid investigation of von Felderzam's administration and severe punishment.

Finally, with a brusqueness thoroughly characteristic of himself, the Minister of the Interior ordered an official investigation of the Political Police in Odessa, thus relieving the Service of the necessity of forcing the issue. An astonishing result of this order was the sudden "illness" of Boris Pelicon, and his departure for his native town in Bessarabia, immediately followed by an unverified report of a fatal "accident." A less astonishing result was the arrest of Colonel von Felderzam, on a charge of treason. Then the unexpected sandwiched itself between the expected. The affair took on the color of sable. As much as possible these hideous revelations of graft, extortion, wanton murder and calumny that followed close upon one another's heels, were kept out of the press and from the knowledge of foreign correspondents, whom, for the purpose of facilitating this prohibition, we accused of attempting to undermine the foundations of autocratic institutions. Colonel von Felderzam was "allowed" to commit suicide. A trial was unnecessary—unthink-

able—would have been nothing less than a farce with "tragedy relief."

Appointed, with examining magistrate extraordinary Orlinsky, to head the investigation, I uncovered the vicious attempt to link the names of the Tzar and Tzarina with the "shame of the Empire" (the Jewish pogroms throughout Russia). All the while, however, my mind was concentrated upon my golden nugget—identity of the exact person or persons who were the real instigators of this ghastly business. It was not long in coming to light. In the vaults of the Political Police and on the person of Colonel von Felderzam, when he was arrested, I discovered, among other incriminating documents, the following:

Document "N" 464.435 P* III 222.P* 194-2.:

A faded letter signed by a single initial "M" surmounted by a crown. It mentioned Colonel Karl von Felderzam's name, giving him absolute power over his superiors connected with the Political Police. The writer insisted on the necessity of the pogroms "as a retribution for the liberties of 1905," recommending him to stir religious trouble through the Orthodox clergy and the leaders of the "Black Hundreds." The letter was addressed to Prince D. of Petrograd, dated July 16, 1906.

Document "T" 666.464.P* 194.464.-3-2-4-XV.-

A picture in water colors of an ancient Slavonic Bible opened on the page with the Ten Commandments. The words "Thou shalt not kill" were erased by a single stroke of the brush, followed by the initial "M" in green ink.

Document "C" 342.516.P* 469-4.X.2.

A letter partly destroyed by acids, addressed to "0042" (Colonel Karl von Felderzam) and signed Catherine de O——, named a person called the "Black Angel of the Pogroms" as the agent of "M".

Document "L" 342.999.P*.

A piece of paper found partly masticated, in the mouth of Colonel Karl von Felderzam, on which only three words were still legible. "My son," and "Alexandra." The signature discovered on the enlarged photograph was a single initial "M".

Examining Magistrate Extraordinary Orlinsky and I, acting on instructions received from Grand Duke Nicholas Nicholaevitch, destroyed one hundred and seven documents signed with the initial "M" surmounted by a crown.

Without exception these documents were typewrit-

ten and so gave no clew to the writer, save for the one designated "C", which was signed by Catherine de O—— in full. But on the back of document "T" was a holograph message, as follows:

"To kill without shedding blood is the only sin . . ." followed by an obscene suggestion too revolting to quote. It was signed, "The Black Angel of the Pogroms."

Seven days later, in the Chief's library in St. Petersburg, we, he and I, compared the photograph of this writing with the specimens in his files until we hit upon its match, the hand of Princess Nina Ordeliany of Georgia. The initial "M" is still a subject of speculation for the uninitiated. The august person whose identity was concealed by that initial has now been summoned by the Supreme Judge, there to answer for the rivers of blood.

The following morning the Princess Ordeliany was found dead in bed, an empty bottle which had contained veronal on a table by her bedside. An overdose no doubt.

As for me, I demanded a vacation. Not fishing and not prescribed. Indefinite, unrestricted. God knows I was in need of it. My mind was in rags, my nerves like so many evil spirits who refused to permit me to

sleep or to eat or to enjoy, without some artificial aid, the most effective being, of course, morphine in continually increasing strength and frequency.

I was ordered to accept furlough.

Case: L1632—142 "B"
File D-13: at. cpr. "10" trt. "3"

Christ of the Steppes

From a Letter of D-13
To Captain C. W. R. Knight

MY HUNTING LODGE NEAR THE HEAD WATERS OF THE Dneiper was buried under tons of drifted snow when I arrived there in my Hispano, a present from His Majesty, and a confounded nuisance on the icy roads where nothing answers but steel shod hoofs and runners. I got down stiffly and stamped my feet to start the circulation which seemed to have ceased altogether. Grim clouds banked in the north appeared hard in the gathering gloom, like mighty steps of granite. East and west the low hills, crowned with gaunt trees, their interlaced branches twisting like tortured fingers in the icy wind, shut out the light. My heart sank, contracted with nostalgic foreboding of the essential loneliness of man separated from his kind by ignorance and stupidity and selfishness, and from God by all the leagues of space and silence between our world and His.

My old caretaker, Nikita, emerged from his hut, Karay, the great, shaggy Russian wolfhound from his. Ayuka Chan, the golden eagle, screamed a welcome;

and Katenka's new-born calf, a milky-eyed thing with a soft and puzzled nose, licked my hand. I felt restored. Perhaps God was not so far away after all. Inside the lodge, books, chemical retorts and animal comfort. "Nerves?" I asked myself. I had none. Disillusion? Cynicism? Bitterness? Where were they?

I must have been meant for such an existence, carved out to fit into a gray niche of spiritual solitude delightfully easy and careless. When you've nothing to do, no aim of any kind, you don't heed life; you smile at the ticking of the clock. No twenty-four hours in every day to be paid for, bought off at the expense of nerves and a clear vision. On the other hand one begins sooner or later to think of women. Solitary thought of women inevitably transmutes itself from the general to the particular, and innocuous dreams evolve into burning desires. A tame man becomes a wild; a civilized gentleman a savage.... Not quite! So much depends upon the woman. In my case she was a charming, cultivated, languorous creature, half French—or was it Spanish—the wife of a husband thirty years too old for her, and in India. Five and a half miles of impassable roads—impassable for my Hispano—between us. Eleven miles on foot

daily, with entertainment, warmth, food, books and passion at one end, and rest at the other. In a few months I was as hard as nails, as keen for realities as formerly I had been for illusions. Keen for the snags with which the Sisters Three garnish our terrestrial paths.

Spring found me wandering about in the region of the river Dneiper, just drifting from village to village, here today and gone tomorrow. No disguise, a good coat of tan, a rusty black kaftan and a considerable knowledge of the local customs and dialect. Ears open, of course, listening to bits of gossip, drinking with the surly Ukranian peasants, tracing the barbed arrows of discontent directed against cruel taxation, military service and the agrarian question. The tardy, antiquated, internally discordant, inefficient and uninspired processes of the Government machine, one by one revealed themselves in their true light with my progress through the villages of the Dneiper. Suppressed hate creamed with superstitions lurked in every hut. Here were the shadows of King Hunger and his three champions, Sickness, Misery and Death. Autocratic Russia draining the very life blood of the Ukraine. And the flame of revolution, fanned by the hands of the arrogant clergy, blazed before the very

ikons in these peasants' homes. The yoke of the church lay heavy on the Ukranian peasant. Religion, distorted and preached through a vodka bottle, pictured the Son of God an exacting taskmaster, with the words "gold, more gold" written on the blood-bespattered Cross.

If you approach the Ukranian peasant in the old noble-sentimental Turgenieff fashion—"I am thy brother," or try to make him talk, using Tolstoy's maxims he will be badly frightened; moreover he will sulk and keep his mouth closely shut. Attune yourself to his mentality, wander hand in hand through the dreamy lanes of his soul, listen to his endless legends barnacled with age, drink with him and sleep off your drink native fashion, in the middle of the muddy road. Or if you are proud of your fists, and the blows they carry, beat the information out of him but remember he is an ugly fighter—knife and teeth.

I sensed a warning rumble of the gathering storm in a friendly outburst of a vodka-crazed beggar directed against the priests collecting their parochial dues. "Christ—Christ of the Steppes is even now walking through the villages of Ukraine! Make way for the peasant Christ!" My ears danced with attention. I took the man under my protection, drank with

him, fed him, gave him money, listened to his night-long garrulity. Got from him all he knew—not much—only that the Christ, the peasant Christ, and two of the Apostles, Luke and Matthew, had been preaching the "New" religion in the district. He had not seen or heard them, had heard only rumors—yet he knew. And I knew. What I knew was briefly, that the New religion would prove soon enough to be a political one—in simplified spelling, R-e-v-o-l-t.

Off duty but duty-bound I sent a lengthy report to the Chief in St. Petersburg, refusing in advance to be assigned to the case—of course, knowing, that to be the surest way of obtaining the assignment. Nikita, my caretaker, riding a spent horse, brought the answer; a soiled grayish blue envelope marked "urgent."

> "Report center trouble radius Ovrouch-Tchernigov spreading east of Kieff. Assistant Minister of the Interior vouches loyalty of troops. You are assigned to handle case. Report progress. Am sending forty men via Tchernigov. Imperative interrogate Christ in camera. Knout."

I did not laugh nor, indeed, weep. No good crying over spilled milk! But substitute "blood" for "milk" and laughter becomes macabre. I will merely outline the conditions I found in Turkovka, a fairly pros-

perous Ukranian village, thirty miles from the main line, Ovroutch-Kieff, the hotbed of this "Christ" propaganda. . . . The church a smoking ruin, the school a brothel, the priest dead, the school mistress a suicide. Government vodka store overrun by a mob of silent, gray-faced, self-appointed judges. Murderers? Hardly. They were doing the Lord's work while serenely waiting the return of the peasant Christ. Piled against the blackened walls of the police station, ikons of the orthodox Christ and the Holy Virgin, hacked, slashed, daubed with red paint, ready for the torch and profanation. Obscene, ingenius, venomed profanation, fed by the fumes of raw alcohol, tortured out of the very soul by years of hunger and despair. The union of anarchy and atheism fostered by the Cloth and the brutality of a blind system which took no account of the mighty Colossus which grows—has ever grown—from the tiny seed of man's subjective nobility.

I lurched into the crowd, gaped at the smoldering ruins, shouldered a path to a heap of stones, climbed, waved my hands and talked, roared, blasphemed, challenged them to further activities, drank from vile smelling bottles and prayed drunkenly. Tongues began to wag, cracked voices sang the simple words of

a hymn celebrating a re-born Christianity. Re-born by virtue of murder and sacrilege! Ignorance on the one hand, treason and incredible greed on the other.

"Christ—Christ of the Steppes—did visit our humble village. Christ and the Apostles! Praise to the peasant Christ for ever and ever!"

Finding it nearly impossible and increasingly dangerous to obtain a fairly accurate description of Christ and the Apostles, I hiccoughed my way to the village boundaries, a creditable imitation of a vodka-soaked man whose sole idea is a gutter and rest. "The peasant Christ"—It was this phase of the situation which constituted the real danger. The Church was cordially hated and had little enough influence save through the power of the knout and threat of the mines. But the "peasant Christ" was the Ukranian peasant's dream. In addition his inborn hatred of all things Russian made him fertile soil for any foreign Secret Service propaganda. The situation was more serious than I had imagined. The apprehension of the Christ was, as the Chief had said, imperative, if we were to learn the source of the propaganda, names, dates, motives, plans. This Christ, then—the Apostles would not do; they were not likely to be in possession of all we wished to know—the "Christ," then, at all costs.

It has been said that loyal men will die by torture rather than betray their masters. It is not true. The best, the strongest, the highest—you—I—our tongues will spout the truth. . . . I have seen it—not once, but times without number.

I left Turkovka at dawn, this time in a Government car escorted by a detachment of mounted gendarmes. The next three weeks I spent in Kieff, attached in a semi-official position to the mixed committee under General G—— of the Political Police, investigating the situation. Under very trying circumstances I succeeded in carrying through the necessary measures, namely a military drag-net in the towns of Olevsk, Turof, Staro-Konstantinoff and Khmelin. Thanks to the hearty coöperation of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Union of the Zemstvos, I was provided with accurate data on the agrarian question; great help in conducting investigations among the taciturn Ukranians. I was progressing. Then to my utter disappointment, I met with a severe rebuff which amounted to plain hostility on the part of the Kieff Metropolitan, F. And before I had penetrated this mystery—it amounted to nothing less than treason, and I was on the point of handing his case to the Holy Synod—I received an order from

Headquarters to drop all investigations until after the review of the Kieff garrison by His Majesty (a totally unnecessary maneuver) at the Sviatoshin Camp. Putting two and two together I began to see the origin of the Metropolitan F's. temerity in defying my orders. I began to see also that it was intended as a measure to prevent the apprehension of the "Christ." 'Who was the traitor this time?' I asked myself, determined to find out and wreak punishment. Nevertheless I was bound by the order from Headquarters; unable to move hand or foot. I sent for one of my personal agents, L.X. 11., a polyglot attached to the Foreign Squad, who soon afterward reported that "Christ" and the two "Apostles" evading the drag-net had been seen in the vicinity of the village of Gorka, forty miles from the town of Khmelin. The Khmelin branch of the Political Police held two men and a woman from the village of Panska-Volya, charged with the murder of the local priest and a Government employe in a vodka store.

Here was release for me. The murder of a priest came under the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan of the disrtict, should he choose to exercise his right; the murder of a government employe, under mine, should I so choose. Meanwhile the conditions in and around

Kieff had all but got out of hand. The Commander-in-Chief of the Kieff garrison was openly insulting when I demanded an escort for my trip to Khmelin. For this he lost his "health"—permanently—and was superseded by his second in command who, profiting by his superior's delirious revelations, obeyed my orders without question or remonstrance. He sent a detachment of Cossacks to the storm center between Ovroutch and Tchernigov, arrested a dozen of the ringleaders, ordered them shot—(an order that was never carried out because the Cossack detachment mutinied, beat their officers to death with the butts of their rifles and joined the uprising)—and gave me a loyal escort and unlimited authority to deal with the affair at Khmelin.

At the investigation of the brutal murders which was conducted in my presence by Examining Magistrate Extraordinary Orlinsky and Col. Sorokin of the Kieff Political Police, the prisoners deposed (verbatim) the following:

Prisoner Nicholas Krestovoy, a blacksmith

"I swear that the men we of the village of Panska-Volya, call in good faith 'Christ of the Steppes and His blessed Apostles, Luke and Mathew,' came from the

town of Ostrog, May (?) (June 20) 1911. Our guests from Heaven wore the ordinary clothes of the black clergy (monks) and their riding boots were of good Russian leather. Christ talked to us in our own language, promising freedom from taxation, military service for our sons, and doctors (vaccination). He said that the Little Father (the Tzar) having married a Niemka (German) had earned the good will of the Angels and the anger of our priests who drink our life blood and dishonor our daughters. I told him (Christ) that my daughter Katerina was pregnant from a priest and therefore useless to work in the fields.

"The blessed Apostle Luke was drunk, having bought a bottle of vodka in the Government store. Christ said it was a good omen and asked the direction to the village of Spassovka, where as everyone knows lived Esaul (Captain) Koritch, a magician who makes powders that smell badly. I killed the priest because he threatened to arrest Christ and had sent his son with a paper to the soldiers at Khmelin. He (the priest) was very fat and I stuck my knife twice into his chest, just the way you kill a pig. Now you can send me to Siberia because I am a very holy man having obeyed the order of our peasant Christ. Amen!"

Prisoner Gordey Shasty (ex-Color Sergeant of the Dragoons)

"I can read and write a little and I am a man of great learning having been a soldier for over ten years. Christ is a man of my height (5 feet 10 inches) thin, brown

eyes, long black hair, and has a good sword wrist. Apostle Luke is short, red face, sweats much and has a scar (scars?) over the right eye. Apostle Matthew is very tall, slender, sunburned, and has a slight limp. Christ said the priests led a fat and easy life, which is true. He also said Esaul (Captain) Koritch was a magician in league with the devil. I killed a government man in the vodka store because he demanded money from the Apostles, and they had none. I guided them (Christ and the Apostles) through the marshes to Koritch's house. They shot and killed him and set fire to the house. There was an explosion because Koritch made bombs for the government. Gladly I accept my fate, Siberia and the mines, having been able to serve the peasant Christ, born in the Steppes of the Ukraine!"

Deposition of Galina Kretchet, a village prostitute, merely revealed a veridic picture of the conditions existing in the Ukraine—hunger and despair lurking in the clouds of Church incense!

The three were hanged.

I went back to Kieff no wiser than when I left it. The review of the garrison by His Majesty was "postponed" till the uprising was suppressed. The Commander-in-Chief was ordered "confined." A worse fate than death—tenfold worse! The Second blew out his own brains. Troops poured into the disaffected villages from four quarters. Blood ran in rivers,

formed lakes and stank to Heaven. The Christ of the Steppes vanished into the limbo of "unbelief"; that is to say, no one had seen him, heard his voice, or any longer believed in his existence. The revolt was crushed to the jolly little tune of two thousand dead peasants, a dozen villages in ashes and as many officials of greater or less degree clanking their way to Siberia.

A small enough price to pay for success, considering the cost of failure. And yet we had failed!

Ukraine was quiet again. But for how long? I was puzzled. A tempest in a teapot? *Mais non!* The Chief joined me at Kieff. He brought with him a copy of a holograph letter addressed to the Tzarina and signed by the Emperor of Germany, warning of the probability of war with France, and suggesting the advisability of a secret treaty between Russia and Germany to be founded upon certain extra conditions—to be revealed later; also a copy of the Tzarina's reply promising complete coöperation, and containing the following words in French

"So much the worse for Nicholas."

When he had given me time enough, in his judgment, to digest this bit of horse meat, he produced the report of M. 14, our man attached to 777-I (Foreign Branch), and at that time in command of the Austrian

Frontier Patrol. From his report I learned that the "Christ" had escaped into Austria under the alias of Peter Kirvenstein, a jewel expert employed by the Tzarina. He had produced a safe conduct signed by the Russian Minister of War and initialed by the Tzarina. On subsequent examination the signature had proved forged, but the initial genuine. The man had been allowed to proceed; but his companions, both Russians, designated in the report as 1.2.2.A.b. and 1.1.2.2.B.B. had been detained. Under "interrogation" they had been induced to confess that they had impersonated the two Apostles, Luke and Matthew. So far they persisted even under extreme interrogation in denying any knowledge of the "Christ's" identity.

That was all. It was enough. I refused to "interrogate" the men further. You cannot make a man tell what he does not know. These two were presented with the "mercy of death," and the discovery of the "Christ's" identity was entrusted to our Austrian resident agent, a man of exceptional ability but of inferior caution. Two weeks later he was murdered—as I had predicted he would be. He was not an operator of the White Branch, but of the *Ochrana,* and as such well-known to all officials of the Ministry of War. This in itself was enough, considering the initial "A" on the

"Christ's" safe conduct was genuine. If the Tzarina was an accessory, even involuntarily, there was treason in the War Ministry. In addition the Austrian agent was a man of reckless courage and indomitable persistence.

Reckless courage is scarcely an asset to a secret service operator. Ingenuity, caution, precaution, even cowardice of a sort, and fear of failure is essential. It is the man who is not afraid of death, or torture—dead men are useless to the Service, and tortured men more likely to betray their own secrets than learn the secrets of others. But the Chief was obdurate to my remonstrances. If the man was murdered, he argued, we would know where the treason lay. The safety of the Empire was at stake. One man's life, even a brave man's, was little enough to pay for the information; besides, he had no one else to send. Every man of the White Branch was up to his ears in work. Not one could be spared.

The man was murdered, as I have said. Out of the official investigation which inevitably followed, some interesting matters came to light, and a single item, utterly insignificant intrinsically, but which induced me to imagine the murder had been ordered, if not committed, by an individual in a high position in the

Russian Ministry of War. I conveyed my suspicion to the Chief with the result that I was instantly detailed to discover the truth at whatever cost short of treason to the Tzar's person. The "Tzar's person" included, of course, his own household, the Dowager Empress and her household and the Grand Dukes and their households. Clearly then this order was to be taken with a grain of salt. At any rate I took it so.

Allow me to elucidate first the single insignificant item which had fired my imagination. It will involve a slight digression, more apparent than real however. Some weeks before intelligence of the activities of this Christ of the Steppes had permeated through the *Ochrana* to the White Branch, an incident had occurred which was recorded only in the annals of the City Police, had attracted little or no attention in other quarters, and even to the City Police appeared as a trifling and not unusual matter. A typical example indeed of what momentous results may sometimes hang upon trifles.

A female typist in the Ministry of War had been drugged in her little attic room and then assaulted. The crime, an ordinary enough one to be sure, was traced to one of her co-workers, a middle-aged clerk, who had several times made advances to her but who

had on each occasion been summarily repulsed. The man confessed. The drug he had used was contained in a cigarette, taken from a package which he had given to the girl during the day immediately preceding the crime. Interrogated as to this drug he would or could reveal nothing. He had, he declared, found the package of cigarettes in the corridor of the building in which he and the girl both worked. He had smoked one of the cigarettes at his home the same evening and had gone into a deep sleep from which his wife had been unable to arouse him until noon of the following day. After some hours of study and experiment he had succeeded in tracing his stupor to the cigarette he had smoked. He had told no one of his discovery, not even his wife. Later the idea of the crime occurred to him, and he had acted upon it. Fortunately for him the girl had recovered. He was given the usual term in prison for such misdemeanors, and the incident was closed—for the police that is. For me, no. On the contrary it stuck in my fertile mind, took root and flowered. Not without reason, to be sure. It was obviously a trick that might be successfully used in matters of importance. Nevertheless it had all but faded from my mind, this incident, when the murder of our resident agent in Austria brought it

back with startling clearness. This man had also been drugged and by a cigarette—or cigarettes—and then strangled with a silken cord. Nothing extraordinarily unusual, no. Except that on examination and analysis, the cigarette end (only one was discovered) proved to be identical in paper, tobacco and drug content, with those which figured in the case of the female typist from the War Ministry.

On this slender thread of evidence my trained imagination wove a complete case—the guilty person, "X." There were of course other factors. The forged signature of the Minister of War and the initial "A," on the safe conduct pass presented at the Austrian border by one, Peter Kirvenstein, "jewel expert"—almost certainly the "Christ of the Steppes." With infinite patience and not a little ingenuity, through a process of elimination, I boiled the matter down to three men, all of high military rank. Then, with less difficulty, to one of these three. This man, whom for the moment I shall call "X," was first a polyglot; second, his features were slightly Semitic; third, his whereabouts during the "Christ of the Steppes" disturbances could not be accounted for, except as follows: "Indefinite leave granted at the request of her Imperial Majesty." Fourth, he appeared in Vienna

Courtesy of Count O. —— U. S. S. R.

Drawing of a Statuette of the "Black Angel of the Pogroms." Note Russian Slavonic character M and profile of Princess Ordeliany of Georgia.

the second day following the escape of Kirvenstein. Fifth, he was the "discoverer" of our Austrian agent's murder. Sixth, he returned to Russia immediately following the inquest and verdict of "suicide." An incredible stupidity, this verdict, since it is obvious that a man cannot strangle himself while unconscious from the influence of a powerful drug!

This was quite enough to convince, but not enough to convict. In fact it was immediately evident that conviction was beyond all possibility. "X" was under the direct protection of the Tzarina. A waiting game was all that was left to us, while a thousand other matters of constantly increasing importance crowded our already overcrowded activities, of which the paramount was the unceasing necessity of protecting the Tzar from the consequences of his own vagaries—vagaries which took a thousand unpredictable forms and were multiplied and complicated by his incorrigible habit of initialing, without reading, any paper presented to him by the Tzarina, the Dowager Empress or the monk Rasputin.

That this ex-horse thief, Rasputin, was not "executed" years before that happy event finally took place, was due, not, as so many have supposed, to the power of the Imperial family to protect him, but solely to the

delusion that he had some magic powers—curative powers—which he exercised on behalf of the Tzarevitch. This delusion was so cleverly, indeed so masterfully created and maintained, that the wisest and most capable minds in Russia were completely deceived, for a time at least. Investigating the matter in my own private capacity, I confess it took me long—too long by far—to discover the true state of affairs. After that it was only a matter of time before the blackest heart in Russia was but carrion for the marine vermin of the Neva.

Too late! Meanwhile the Empire disintegrated steadily, day by day, before our eyes. The *Ochrana,* grown mentally obese on its diet of blood and anguish, became more and more helpless to deal with the underground activities of the revolutionary elements, made up, as has since been revealed, of a dozen or more opposing ideas, but, until the debacle of 1917, united under the single determination to eliminate, first, the Romanoff Dynasty.

"The mills of the gods. . . ."

Angry, bitter, sick with self-disgust at my failure (the first in my career) to apprehend the "Christ of the Steppes," I determined to finish my leave at my old house in St. Petersburg. I had, I believed, hit upon

a combination of fertilizers which would, with some further experimenting on the ground, make possible the cultivation of English potatoes on my Ukranian estates. With this in mind, and the excitement of the creator—the chemist often feels it—I barricaded myself, so to speak, in my own house, and set to work. The Russian Empire might crumble, the Romanoffs might be deposed; revolution and anarchy might consume the world, without so much as occasioning me a moment's concern!

That was the way I felt. My appetite was splendid. I slept eight hours at a stretch, smoked little, drank not at all, only experimented, experimented, experimented!

But my dream soon enough turned to the stuff of dreams. And reality once more took its toll.

Case: 9988—3 and 6
File D-13: at. cpr. "S" and "C"

The Tzar's Letter

From a Letter of D-13
To Mrs. H. B. St. Ives

ST. PETERSBURG PRETENDED TO BE LONDON. FOG CURLED its greenish-gray tentacles round the golden dome of the Kazan Cathedral, hung in loose wisps over the trees on Vasily Ostroff, and engulfed the coal barges on the Neva. I had been experimenting with some proteinates and organic silver compounds and was utterly absorbed when the code lamp attached to my private telephone flashed white, red, white, red, in rapid succession. Mechanically the brain translated "general call," while the hands continued manipulating delicate scales. The lamp winked twice more, went out, winked six times, with varying pauses between, spelled: "D-13 wanted Headquarters," then a rapid succession of flashes completed the message—"Chief's private library." Flash—white, red, green. White, red, green—steady white. "Urgent!"

I picked up the cigar lighter that had been knocked off the table, snapped it open and with the cigarette burning indulged in two short words—"Damn you!" My heart sank. I cursed long and loudly. I had the

Chief's word that nothing short of the collapse of the Empire would induce him to disturb my well-earned rest again. An exaggeration, of course; still the matter was clearly urgent beyond the usual—and God knows the usual was urgent enough in those days! I dared not waste time arguing the matter, but got out my roadster and dashed into the night fog, thin, clammy, penetrant, blurring the streets. My driving evoked a few pointed remarks from the monumental police officer posted outside the gates of the Winter Palace. I reached Headquarters in record time, locked my car in my private garage, signed the usual "duty" register and found the antiquated lift a perfect nuisance.

The marble satyr on the door of the library grinned an age-old grin. I hooked my fingers over his stone flute, pressed slightly, pulled, increasing the pull until a panel opened revealing six coiled wires crackling faintly. A pass key from my pocket cut off the current, the door opened and as I passed through clicked to behind me. The current had resumed its automatic watch.

I was alone, in the huge, familiar room. Candle light played over the Byzantine lips of "Our Lady of Achtyr," a dark painting framed in black, skipped over the blood-red surface of a Bashkir sarcophagus, mocked

an academic monstrosity, also framed in black and catalogued as *"L'Etude d'un Viellard."* The walls were lined with open bookshelves which reached from the floor nearly to the vaulted ceiling, leaving only space enough for a row of marble busts, a nightmarish collection cherished by the Chief . . . Elegant Petronius rubbed shoulders with plebeian Gorky; Tolstoy conversed with Thomas Carlyle; Philostratus glared at Botkin; and Mark Twain leaned confidentially toward Dostoieffsky. At the southern end of the room was a massive desk littered with portfolios, charts, papers and the blue and yellow "flimsies"—reports of agents scattered throughout Russia.

I drank Bacardi from a pocket flask, fed the goldfish in their malachite prison, and examined the bookshelves while I waited, interminably as it seemed. Crime in all its phases and ramifications was represented, without being limited to a narrow "official" interpretation of criminology. There were entire sections devoted to prison reform, spy methods, child prostitution, drugs, criminal argot, suicide, abnormal psychology, nymphomania, sexual perversion, pauperism, code writing, ritual flagellation, the history of Scotland Yard, etc., etc.

Ten minutes . . . fifteen . . . twenty slipped away.

A brass panel over the desk clicked audibly—one—two—pause three—and automatically lighted a white bowl hung on three gilded chains from the ceiling's centre. Purely from force of habit I released the safety catch on my heavy automatic and with a scowl noted the time—12.20 a. m. A sliding panel behind the Bashkir coffin opened, disclosing a narrow passage scarcely wide enough for a full-grown man. A moment and the Chief stood in the room. His clothes had the limp unfreshness of too many consecutive hours of wear, his face a trifle pasty, the eyelids an angry red. The desk received a proprietary glance, a manicured nail tapped an amber cigarette holder. He yawned, then came a frown which faded into an owlish smile as he handed me an assignment card which read thus:

"D-13 is detailed to Operation 97.-3 St. C. N. and will act as follows . . ."

I read no further. One acted as one pleased, the cut and dried methods printed on the card being an inheritance of long standing from the sages of the Ministry of the Interior.

The Chief talked and joked. The Bacardi in my pocket flask shared by him, lent his jokes a French flavor. I was not amused, and tried to hold him to the business in hand. The business being nothing less in-

credible than that I had been elected by those in power —whom, I could not imagine, and the Chief refused to divulge—to search a woman's room: a scientific search along the lines of the German Nachrichten Bureau. Dirty, tame work! Objective. Stolen love letters in the hands of a second-rate demi-mondaine. D-13 of the Personal Court Branch, in the role of a cheap divorce specialist, searching for love letters in cupboards and drawers, and wondering if the lace on the undies really matched the peach organdie—*Tiens!* I was in a rage—the sort of rage that swells the vocal cords, making speech difficult, and discipline—I mean to say, soldierly self-control—impossible.

With the utmost irony I intimated as much to the Chief. He motioned for silence, indicated the time—the Zero Hour for reports. The multicolored lamps on the switch board began to glow, blue, green, orange, white, red, as the various undercover men sent in their reports. Except when "cut out" by the Chief's order, these messages were received also in the code room on the street floor, and were transcribed by the secretaries on duty there. Evidently they were cut out now, for the Chief sat before the lamps, pencil in hand, his attention absorbed.

I sought the file which corresponded with my

assignment card—97.3. In it I discovered a large envelop, marked "St. Cyr, Nana, alias Catherine Bochard," and some recent clippings from a theatrical magazine. I adjusted a portable lamp, spread out the data on a table and studied it.

"Nana St. Cyr (Bochard), born September 14, 19— in Bouveret, Switzerland. Five feet seven inches. Complexion medium, hair blond, eyes gray. Weight (summer) 125 (winter) 135."

Her profession was given as "Theatrical" and "Free Lance." She had been treated on several occasions for a chronic venereal disease, also her teeth had been recently scaled, that is to say, filed to an evenness. Her lover of the moment was designated as "One, Boris." The sum mentioned for "favors" was a thousand pounds sterling, roubles were not acceptable. Her residence was given as 18 Nijny Avenue. At the bottom of the page the Chief had scribbled an obscene comment, which was nevertheless as good as a death warrant. I began to see why I had been chosen for this particular affair. Though I was not appeased, far from it indeed!

This Nana St. Cyr was one of our "Free Lance" spies. The "Free Lance" section of the Service, as its name indicates, supplied all data concerning the so-

called Free Lance spies temporarily employed by any foreign powers. Spies spying upon spies. The agents attached to this particular section were usually promoted from the ranks of the undercover observers after a convincing test of their ability to "get data." They were chosen from all classes of society. Some were members of the nobility, others were hardened criminals, capable of the foulest deeds. One, "D-13" was said to have built up this formidable system, docketing nine hundred odd spies in the space of five years, the famous Irma Staub (Baroness Messinger) included. And, as you will have already guessed, Nana St. Cyr (Bochard)! The Shepherd must look after his sheep!

Voila l'affaire! It was idiotic to the very last degree! I knew better, of course, but chose to take it that way. I fed the goldfish again, scowled at the Chief, who neither spoke, nor returned my evil look, wriggled into my otter coat and had another sip of Bacardi for good luck as I went. My box of mechanical tricks popped out of the garage with a roaring swish, the horn brayed, streets ran away in a blur of yellow light. Where Nijny Avenue joins Tchechov Street before slipping down hill to Nevsky Prospect, I found one of our men who took charge of my road-

ster. I advanced at a pace, my interest miraculously aroused by my ignorance of the exact point of my assignment.

Number 18 could not be called a princely mansion, not by any stretch of the imagination. The house was sixteenth century gothic in style, the pinnacles and deep niches, with an occasional medieval statue, suggested the pseudo-Byzantine touch rather popular at the moment with the city plutocrats. And yet no derogatory appellation can detract from the air of Turgenieff feudalism that emanated from the great rectangular blocks of gray limestone. I found the high front door with its pointed pediment above the gracefully arched entrance, clapped a hand on my "burglar kit" and smiled. Fingers clenched and unclenched. The wrists received their rubber bindings to hold them steady, the stomach another dose of Bacardi, the brain an order—"Ready . . . work!"

Taking one of our specially treated umbrella ribs, with a fine wire attached to the end of it, I ran it through the keyhole and pulled the wire toward myself, making a bow of the rib inside the door. Carefully manipulating this, I finally managed to catch the end of it round the knob on the bolt above the lock and jerk the bolt back from the socket in the door

casing. Skeleton keys did the rest. The door opened without a creak. The place smelled musty and a trifle fetid. I played my flash light over the hall, located a flight of steps thickly carpeted and went up.

Three flights and I reached the apartment "L", the one I sought, listened a moment, slipped the master key into the lock and entered. I hoped my party had not returned from her cabaret yet; I'm not fond of hysterics. Not that I really cared. I was there on business—and the end was the same in any case. Stepping into the living room I switched on a table lamp, made a quick inspection, and whistled. Four tables were piled high with greasy dishes and empty champagne bottles. The chairs bore mute evidence of a game called *chasse-au-lapin,* the carpet was badly stained and powdered with crushed glass. A typical Russian orgy, crude and lacking the very element of coveted sin. Karamazoff diluted with Oxford! It was now four o'clock in the morning. I found a curtained door, knocked and receiving no answer, venturned a polite *"On entre, mademoiselle?"* and opened the door.

Well! She was dead. Nana St. Cyr would never sing her *"Pet-pet petit cochon"* again, not in this dull world of ours at any rate. As for me, my task was

simplified; after that the rest was a matter for the City Police.

I noted the exact position of the body. It was stretched full length across the bed, one limp arm protecting a rosy-cheeked doll. A Freudianism exemplified! The face presented a grimace of agony. *Tiens!* I went over the skin for possible wounds, noted only what appeared to be a mere pin prick in the neck—nothing that seemed likely to cause death—and sniffed at the lips for any odor that might suggest poison. Nothing!

Mystified and much perplexed, but keenly interested now, I searched the rooms thoroughly. An ancient *vargueño,* a Spanish cabinet mounted on an elaborately carved and richly inlaid stand, gave up the following collection, highly typical of the owner: an emerald and diamond pendant—a very naughty pendant—four blond wigs, a forged passport viséd by the Russian Embassy in Berlin, a set of burglar's tools, six cakes of soap, each cake containing a tiny vial of gallic acid, a roll of paper money, an automatic with a silencer, surgical needles and some flimsy underwear. Nothing of the slightest significance. Even the green safian riding boots with their hollow silver heels failed to produce anything more than a few pellets of opium. But flung across a chair in an adjoining cup-

board I found a magnificent civet coat, smelling slightly of violets. I "fanned" the lining. It crackled and felt stiff under the armpits, just stiff enough to warrant a triumphant *"C'est ça!"*

I rolled the coat into a fluffy bundle, locked the room and cat-footed down the long flights to the street. From a nearby chemist's shop I telephoned the Criminal Investigation Department, giving the bare details of my discovery. A sleepy voice drawled: "That French slut . . . !" then came the audible click of the telephone receiver. A police requiem for a flower of sin!

Home. Gray dawn crept over the city. I snapped the bolt on my private "lab," cleared the table of its litter of retorts, and set to work. A surgical probe inserted under the lining of the coat found a solid object; knife and fingers, did the rest. A metal badge with the number, 01171S, tinkled on a marble slab. The letters A. F. on the reverse identified the owner with the Nachrichten Bureau—the German Secret Service. I smiled sourly. One of my sheep! With scissors, delicate, thin, designed by a famous surgeon for operations on intestinal ulcers, I soon had the lining under the arm-pits loose. Something stopped the progress of the cutting blades. I jerked a pair of pincers from their rack, pulled, twisted, pulled again and drew out

a soiled envelope, the flap sealed only with glue. A moist towel loosened the flap, and I discovered what presumably I had been sent to find; a single sheet of writing paper with a code message hastily written in pencil. A childishly simple code such as all secret service bureau's use as a blind. I decoded the message in my head. It read: "Come home at once mother is dying."

But my eyes were dry. No treacherous tears dimmed their hard glint. I gave my memory an order: "mother"—? . . . Ah! the code word for Foreign Office, London. It was—or seemed—merely an order to one of the Silver Greyhounds (British Secret Service Agents) to return to London. This was not what I had been called to find! . . . More work, and a bad smell! Iodine vapors and the applications of certain analysed reagents brought out the real message, written in a weak solution of organic salts.

"Hon. Cecil M. S-W. Previous agreement between cousins, dated Frogmore, July 6, 1910 rendered valueless since (your) latest purchase. Utmost value attached (to it) by the Kennel of the Silver Greyhounds. Report F. O. London, August 20.

Message ends 777666422

L.G."

I did not waste time and effort over that part of the message which meant nothing to me—the reference to a "previous agreement between cousins" and the figures "777666422." That could wait. My attention was absorbed by the words: "Latest purchase. Utmost value attached" . . . I glanced at my desk calendar—August 15. The Hon. Cecil was ordered to report August 20! The Chief was barely in time. I saw more clearly than before the reason I had been selected for this search. Somehow the Chief had got wind of this "purchase" of the Hon. Cecil's and had decided it was of an importance! I began to suspect that the affair would prove increasingly interesting to my temperament and tastes in matters of this calibre.

I telephoned Headquarters at once and got K-14, one of our cleverest operators, a close friend, and detailed him to discover whatever he might as to the Hon. Cecil's movements. A responsibility I took upon myself in spite of the simple fact that I had no authority to do so! I bolted a hot breakfast and set off with my prize. I found Headquarters, always a busy place, in a state of feverish activity, the Chief too occupied at the moment to attend me. I sought the file cabinet and looked up the Hon. Cecil M. S-W to refresh my memory.

All foreign diplomats, from the ambassador to a humble third secretary—which latter was the Hon. Cecil's "official" position at his Embassy,—had, in our jargon, a "pedigree." A pedigree written on a white card meant "above suspicion." A gray card "watch carefully." A red card "Dangerous." The card "No. 003642 Hon. Cecil M. S-W. third secretary pro tem" was not only red but scribbled all over with succulent comments by the Chief.

I smiled as I read. The Hon. Cecil had long been a thorn in the side of my estimable Chief, who was without doubt the ablest director of secret service in Europe at that time. I speculated now with a certain sardonic enjoyment as to how the Chief would take this new complication. For complication it certainly was! The Hon. Cecil, "third secretary pro tem," was just a plain spy (not an ordinary one, *mais non!*) but one whose methods of getting data, political data of the utmost importance, bordered on the uncanny. Speaking several languages perfectly, he had on occasion palmed himself off, with complete success, as German, French, Dutch, English, Russian. His pedigree card ended with a notation in green ink—"Born out of wedlock. Son of a reigning monarch." It was, of course, this last detail which contained the

heart of the complication for us, since because of it he was a protege, as one says; or to be more clear, under the direct protection of kinship with the Tzar!

You can imagine, then, my impatience, induced, partly at any rate, by an enormous curiosity as to my further activities in the Case. But I was forced to wait. And while I waited I received a message from the City Police, plus a statement from the Criminal Investigation Department. Both described in terse official phraseology the cause of Nana St. Cyr's death as "heart failure due to excessive drinking." With the filing of these reports Nana St. Cyr (Bochard) ceased to interest the Service. One did not even wonder how she really came by her death! Though we learned that soon enough, in all conscience.

When the Chief was at last free to discuss my report he pronounced it the most serious complication the Hon. Cecil had yet involved us in. My guess was correct. The Chief already had information of the fellow's "purchase"—(theft, he called it)—and from a high source, though not from the Tzar; but he was still in the dark as to its precise nature. At the same time the information placed before him had indicated the supreme importance of its immediate recovery. The Chief suggested a discrete search of the Hon.

Cecil's apartment at the Metropole. I demurred, reminding the Chief that even a third secretary of the most important Embassy in St. Petersburg—at that time—was not to be handled in such fashion. I proposed that he close the frontier, which could be done on any flimsy pretext, temporarily, and thus delay the Hon. Cecil's departure. He was, perhaps, on the point of agreeing with me, when the code lamps over the marble mantelpiece in the north corner of the room flashed red, green, yellow and blue, the blue ten times repeated at short intervals in between flashes of green and red. This meant a message of great importance. I darted to the switch which cut the lamps out from the secretaries' room on the ground floor, and snatched paper and pencil. The Chief, in his slightly cracked voice counted off the colored flashes and I wrote: "K. 14 reports—having seen the Hon. Cecil M. S-W. in Company Geneviève DeB."

The Chief and I stared at each other. There was not a moment to lose after that. In fact it might already be too late; for Geneviève De B. was, if not the most notorious, at any rate one of the cleverest international spies not in the Russian Service. Our only doubt, since we were ignorant of the precise nature of the Hon. Cecil's "purchase," was as to whether she

was working with him or in the service of some individual or faction or nation, anxious to obtain possession of the "purchase." If the latter, we were very possibly already beaten at our own game. Naturally we were on our mettle! Yet consider the dilemma confronting us. On the one hand the Tzar's "kinsman" who until that moment had been sacrosanct. On the other, the very real possibility of being held accountable for the loss of this important document.

The Chief was in a condition bordering on blind rage. He flatly refused, he said, to countenance any longer the bold treachery of the Hon. Cecil, and in his determination to justify himself for taking action without first seeking permission, he reminded me for perhaps the ten thousandth time, that of all people alive the Tzar required to be protected against himself. I laughed cynically and muttered blasphemies—not against God, but the Romanoffs in general and particular!

To search the Hon. Cecil's suite at the Metropole, however delicate a matter, was not in itself a difficult task, provided the man himself could be got rid of for the time. The hotel, like most such places in Russia, had found it less trouble to remain blandly ignorant of what its guests did during the day, pro-

vided they did it quietly, than to maintain a brace of snoopers to each floor. That little courtesy extended by the management to the resident demi-mondaine facilitated my work. My whole appearance blended with the atmosphere of the place: black morning coat, black waistcoat, black satin ascot tie holding a large pearl pin, striped gray trousers and patent leather boots, beside a face make-up that would have done credit to a French actress.

The suite was on the fourth floor round a turn of the red carpeted corridor. A greasy suggestion to the floor waiter, and a substantial tip, secured the field to me without the necessity of using harsh measures. The entrance door was open and the suite empty apparently save for a boy dusting a row of mahogany shelves in the tiny reception room. I pressed a large bill into his itching palm. He disappeared whistling cheerfully. I closed and locked the door.

But the suite was not empty! In fact it was very much occupied, and by the very man I wished to avoid. Not, however, in a manner to prevent my mission. Though I confess I was deeply shocked, for the Hon. Cecil M. S-W. was, as the French peasants say, "entirely dead," his half-naked body piled under the table, one leg bent and twisted, the other caught by an over-

turned chair, and it was all too evident that he had not died willingly. His face, exceptionally handsome in life, was not a pretty sight now. Cadaveric spasm taxes even an expert mortician, proficient as he may be with scalpel and brush! This discovery in connection with exactly the same thing at Nana St. Cyr's flat, struck me at once as peculiarly significant. I proceeded with the utmost caution, as well as despatch!

Lunch for two was laid in the salon, the sort of meal a bachelor would offer to his *"petite dame,"* sturgeon caviare and hot house peaches included. A telephone bell rang noisily. I waited tense. To be interrupted at this point! The third time it rang I picked up the receiver and said, mimicking a servant's tones, "No one at home."

A quick glance through the other rooms showed me nothing of interest. Back to the corpse. A diplomatic pouch half concealed under his shoulders—perhaps he had struggled to protect it—its sides slashed with some sharp instrument told me in a flash that the murderer of the Hon. Cecil was already in possession of whatever might have been of interest to the Service. However I did not give up at once. A gray tweed suit flung over a chair absorbed my attention. On the inner side of the waistcoat were deep "professional" pockets

fastened with zip-snaps on the protecting flaps. In each of these pockets were several oiled silk envelopes, all of which were empty. Examination of the other pockets in the suit disclosed only a pin in the form of a silver grayhound, a considerable sum of money, several unmounted photographs in an envelop, coded credentials, pass words printed in the text of a mock "Bible" and some morphine tablets. I swore audibly. Further examination of the mock Bible revealed, in the second chapter of Revelation, three widely separated letters—capital A, small b and d which had been perforated by a pin. I pocketed the Bible, glanced once more at the almost nude corpse, and with a feeling as near to excitement as I had experienced for many a long day, got out of the suite and locking the door behind me, sauntered down the stairway and out through the lobby, bestowing large tips as I went.

As I stepped into the street an old man grinding a wheezy hand organ lurched across the pavement bringing with him a pungent odor of cheap wine. He paused directly in front of me and with a pretense of reaching for the coppers I held out to him showed a card on which were a series of figures interspersed by occasional letters. My agile mind deducted the following "Court rumors hint at possible change. Grand

Duke Cyril's faction attacks Emperor's attitude in connection Sir Paul Duke's speech." I dropped the coppers over the card and passed the old man—(L. 1 of the Foreign Branch). The organ wheezed a lively polka at my back.

I smoked a tasteless cigarette. The perforated letters in the mock Bible. . . . A. b. d.—*Quien Sabe?* I made nothing of it. But I was too full of my recent experience to give it much thought. The Hon. Cecil's death would certainly occupy the Chief for some time to come. This would not be, I foresaw, a matter for the City Police like poor Nana St. Cyr's. Nor would it be dismissed with a mere report. I recalled the words on the red "pedigree" card I had taken from the file at Headquarters that morning. "Born out of wedlock. Son of a reigning monarch. . . . " There was going to be the devil to pay—and unless I were quite off the track, and I seldom made a mistake in such close analyses in those brave days—Geneviève De B—— would be called upon to pay him!

Back at Headquarters, the Chief agreed with my view of the affair. Telephones, telegraphs, code lights hummed, clicked, flashed. But the astute Geneviève was not so easily trapped. Days went by. The Embassy issued an official communique in which the

death of the Hon. Cecil M. S-W., third secretary pro tem, was described as "heart failure," which deceived nobody—that is to say, nobody it was intended to deceive. Men brought up in the best traditions of the snooping school "believe" nothing. But of course there had been an autopsy at which our most trusted medico was present, and on the fifth day I waited with the Chief for this report.

The Chief, busy with his "flimsies" rose immediately when a tall gray-haired individual was ushered into the room. From a notebook which he pressed into my hand I read: "Having personally conducted an autopsy on the body of the late Hon. Cecil M. S-W., I am submitting my opinion as requested.

"No trace of poison was discovered in the stomach, liver, kidneys or blood. Stoppage of the heart action was caused by something which tampered with the normal resistance and muscular pressure and allowed the stream of blood to rush to the right auricle with a sudden shock. When the sub-normal flow of blood (owing to excessive drinking) was thus suddenly checked, the walls of the passage between the two cavities collapsed retarding the flow still more, until clots began to form and stopped it altogether."

As I finished reading the report aloud, my eyes

assumed their hard professional glint and a question. The medico glanced behind him at the single door, then at the Chief, and taking a visiting card from his pocket guided a slow pencil across it. The Chief and I watched.

"Murdered by an empty hypodermic syringe which when pressed into a vein injected compressed air—enough to produce blood clots thus causing 'heart failure.'"

The Chief nodded, thanked him and permitted him to depart, which he seemed nervously anxious to do.

As soon as the door closed after him, the sliding panel behind the Bashkir sarcophagus opened, and a sentinel ushered in a uniformed messenger from the Ministry of the Interior. At the same time he announced a visitor. The Chief grunted and followed the sentinel out of the room, while I took from the messenger a plain gray envelop sealed with red wax, glanced at the superscription and whistled under my breath. I signed the receipt, and dismissed the messenger.

The Chief reappeared in the company of a man whose name and rank entitled him to the highest military honors not only in Russia but in foreign countries as well. I bowed and handed him the gray

envelop, which was addressed to him. He opened it, glanced at the contents and with a nervous characteristic shrug of his broad shoulders ordered the panel closed. This done by the simple act of pressing a push button, our visitor unfolded a single sheet of paper, a copy of a letter addressed to the Minister of the Interior, and in a voice that sounded dry and hollow, his temples mottled with pounding blood, read aloud:

"I, the undersigned, killed the Hon. Cecil M. S.-W. . . Nana St. Cyr was put out of the way by my orders and by the same method, as she had a message for Cecil from his government, which might have interrupted my plans. I received two million francs for my services. One million for retrieving the letter that Cecil had stolen, the other for executing the thief. My present address is Koursk, Hotel Bristol, suite 321 bis.

I advise the Chief of the Russian Imperial Secret Service not to make a hasty move.

Marquise Geneviève De B——"

Below the signature was a design hastily drawn in pencil—copied from the Tzar's private correspondence stationery!

The letter was decidedly clever. The giving of a definite address, and adding the Tzar's private monogram was subtle. The Chief of the Russian Secret Service would be forced to move cautiously if at all!

Meanwhile the Marquise would have time and unhampered opportunity to get herself out of Russia.

We were privileged of course to ignore its warning tone; but consider. If the warning proved on investigation to be nothing more than a crude attempt at a blind, and the implication of the Tzar in the Hon. Cecil's murder, a vindictive calumny, the Chief would certainly be held to account for the murderer's escape. On the other hand, if it proved to be true—which all things considered, seemed more than probable—our dilemma of five days ago was duplicated. And our exalted guest demanded instant action! The stolen letter—the letter must be recovered at once. Let the woman go if need be. Punishing her would not bring the Hon. Cecil back to life. That harm was irrevocable. But the letter in the hands of "God knows whom!" We might all lose our heads—literally.

Thus he talked. The Chief agreed—perforce. The exalted one left us to chew on our difficulty—and do nothing! A course fortunately justified only a few hours later by the reception of an order direct from the Tzar, which read:

"Re: death Hon. Cecil M. S. W. . . etc.
No further action.
N. I."

But the Chief's difficulty was not so simply resolved. Our exalted visitor of the previous day returned. Evidently he was cognizant of the Tzar's order. He came, he said, to inform the Chief that the order did not apply to the stolen letter, but only to the murder. The letter must be recovered at all cost, and immediately! In vain the Chief protested and showed the Tzar's order—"No further action." Our visitor insisted that the order was given in ignorance of the real danger, which was to the Empire itself. He pointed out, what the Chief well knew—in fact, what we all knew, except the Tzar, apparently—that the Empire was a powder mine of conflicting interests and powers. A single spark would explode the mine. Then chaos, in which the Tzar would be the first to fall.

The Chief agreed, yet obstinately refused to move. Seeing the stalemate, I offered on my own responsibility, at my own expense and—with the Chief's permission—in direct violation of the Tzar's order, to undertake the recovery of the stolen letter. This brought the Chief's difficulty to a solution. But mine!

I was completely in the dark as to the main points. First, the writer of the letter. Second, the letter's intended destination. Even our exalted—and excited—

visitor was, he declared, ignorant on these points; though this was manifestly not true. I was, then, forced to assume that the Tzar was the writer, and by logical reasoning, the instigator of the Hon. Cecil's murder. A false move might precipitate a cataclysm—for me at any rate.

In addition, often as I had heard of her, oddly I had never set eyes on the Marquise De B. She was shy of photographers—an uncommon characteristic for so beautiful a woman as the Marquise was reputed to be. I had, you see, nothing to go on but a description. She had given her address as Koursk, Hotel Bristol, but I was not hopeful of finding her there nearly ten days after the event; for safe as she knew herself by this time—that is, from the Russian police—she no doubt guessed that until that letter was secure in the hands of the exalted personage who had hired her to "retrieve" it, she would be quarry for the hounds of at least two governments. Of only one thing I felt sure, I had plenty of time. Geneviève De B. would be in no hurry to sell; her price would be the very limit, and she would play one bidder against the other.

I was right, as my first investigations proved. Koursk yielded not even a clue; and it was not until nearly three months had stolen away from us, three

months of work, with danger a plaything and sleep a paradox, that I found her. I was in Geneva, on what seemed a rather vague "tip" that the Marquise De B. was there. Ostensibly, I was investigating a political swindle, and enjoying a glass of beer at the Jardin Anglais. Diplomats and secret agents of fifty-six nations were amusing themselves with an air of cultured boredom—"monocled boredom"—emphasized by drooping cigarettes. Two fine looking Englishmen, a member of the Cabinet and a director of a well-known firm, attracted my attention as they passed me in search of a vacant table. Then a third, a handsome man with a military bearing and closely cropped mustache, following behind, his eyes casually scanning the various international groups.

I crushed a half-smoked *Régie,* picked up my menu card as a blind, and gave my memory an encouraging prod. . . . Ah, of course! Captain Lilienfield of a prominent Foreign Office, a secret service operator—and a ruthless devil. I had met him once, years before. He had served me an ill turn—albeit unconsciously on his part—and I had not forgiven him.

There were several persons at near-by tables who watched his slender, white-flanneled figure, and among them I noted a handsomely dressed woman who might

have belonged to the aristocracy of birth or adventure. She paid her bill and in doing so snapped her bag twice, paused and then continued snapping it, as though playing with the jewelled clasp. It was obviously a code message, though I had no idea of its meaning. I grew tense. One eye on Lilienfield, the other on the lady, I recalled the description I had from the "pedigree" card of the Marquise at Headquarters, in St. Petersburg. Yes, it fitted this woman—"Dark hair. Blue eyes. Face, oval. Complexion exquisite. Height——" and so on and so on. It might be—it might not be Geneviève! Dropping my napkin to the floor I stooped for it, and at the same time signalled my man, L. X. 11, at the table on my right to attend the lady. Then as I raised my head, face hidden behind my napkin, and glanced at Lilienfield, he lighted a cigar, blew out the match in two unnecessary puffs —a rather worn trick—and looked directly at the lady. Had he seen me watching him? Did he recognize me? I could not tell. I looked away and took out a smooth gold case, selected a cigarette with meticulous care—the highly polished metal a perfect mirror when I adapted my angle of incidence to the angle of reflection. The expected immediately happened! The lady's bag dropped to the ground, Lilienfield sprang forward,

picked it up and returned it to its owner—minus something from its contents. The famous *passe en avant* of master spies—long disused because long well-known. I felt for the Britisher, sure that his methods were not so grotesquely outworn. Ruthless, yes, but clever as the very devil himself.

With a glance in my direction, which warned me that he had indeed recognized me, Lilienfield turned and sauntered out of the place. I overtook him at the corner of Krauss Street, really a blind alley, and now deserted save for a drunken beggar sleeping in the middle of the road. My catlike tread had made not a sound, but he knew, somehow. "On guard!" His bullet went through my hat and flattened against the wall. I struck before he could fire a second time—not with my fist, you understand, as he would have done—those English! I smashed him a hard clip with my service .38. He hit the street, rolled over once and lay still in the gutter—where he belonged.

I found the object of my search without difficulty, far back in the gallant Captain's throat—a crumpled, wet ball of paper. What it might be I could only speculate, but that it was the stolen letter for which I had so long sought did not for an instant enter my mind. My only hope was that it might contain information which

would forward the real object of my efforts. I reached my hotel without further encounter, an unhoped for respite, and succeeded in making out the message; all save the last three words, which were blurred beyond restoration, though the initials in place of signature were still intact. The message was in English, written on the Tzar's private correspondence stationery, stamped with his monogram in gold. It was unmistakably holograph, and read as follows:

"Dear Willie,

Resolved to abdicate in favor of Cyril and Victoria. In event of German mobilization against France, Cyril —— —— ——

N. I."

Cynical and disillusioned as I was, I choked on the surprise of it. The incredible folly of both Lilienfield and the Marquise in transferring such a document in such a public manner and place struck me with renewed force. Close as had been my contact with women and intensive as my study of feminine psychology, I experienced the same amazed incredulity I had felt years before when as a youth of sixteen I received from one of them my first lesson in the mysteries of sex.

My amazement was soon crowded from my mind,

however, by satisfaction at my success. Understanding of the far from characteristic excitement displayed by the Exalted Person who was responsible for my undertaking, and his determination that the Chief should flatly disobey the Tzar's express order, "No further action," gave me a much-needed insight into this great soldier's character—an insight which was of inestimable value to me later on in following out certain matters of extreme importance to the Empire, but which came too late after all to save even the vestige of Romanoff honor.

My first impulse was to reach St. Petersburg in as short a time as possible. But immediately I realized that my task was not finished. Had the Tzar's message been photographed? The answer was impossible to come at by speculating upon it. Had the Marquise De B. been of my sex the answer would have been "yes." But since she was not, one could be certain only of uncertainty. An interview then, was imperative. But Lilienfield! Lilienfield was no doubt well on the way to recovery by this time. His intelligence was far above that of the usual Service operator even among his class, which was of *premier force*. However he was alone. That was proved by my encounter with him and my unobstructed escape.

I would have to risk Lilienfield; but not without precautions for the destruction of the Tzar's letter in the event of failure. In order to ensure this destruction, I rolled the letter into a small tube, placed it in a glass vial which I filled with a preparation of dry salts mixed with a tiny amount of sulphuric acid, modified with mercurized phosphorus. Then I corked and sealed the vial with wax. A few minutes in this mixture would obliterate the writing on the paper; but it could be restored, almost to its original density, by a bath in a photographic developer, which was my own discovery and secret. The positive protection lay in the simple fact that from three to five seconds' exposure to the air would completely disintegrate the paper unless instantly plunged into the developer bath.

It was necessary to wait for a report from L. X. 11 before I could move. The following two hours of suspense were much like those minutes in the dentist chair, his electric drill grinding hard against an aching tooth, each succeeding second bringing the certainty that the crumbling wall of the tooth will suddenly give way and the whirling drill plunge deep into the quivering nerve! Eternity! I consumed a few of these interminable minutes in composing and despatching a

telegraphic message to the Chief informing him of my prize and its content. Then I sat down to wait. I smoked incessantly, drank not at all, consulted my watch a hundred times. At the end of two hours the report was in my hands. Another ten minutes before it was decoded.

The Marquise De B., under the alias of Madame Francine La Cossite, was not stopping at an hotel, but at a private house. The proprietor of the establishment was a relative of the Marquise's, Monsieur S., whose married son and daughter-in-law lived with him. The menage consisted of eleven servants of whom seven were of the house, the other four of the stables and gardens. The Marquise had left the Jardain Anglais immediately following my own and Captain Lilienfield's departure, and had gone straight home. Was still there. Monsieur S. was also at home. The son and daughter-in-law were not.

I glanced again at my watch, 12:41 a. m. Late, but an emergency. I could not afford a delay of even those few hours till morning. I found my faithful L. X. 11 on the spot, and leaving him to deal with the police officer, should one appear, walked up to the front door of the house, which was still lighted. A man servant answered my ring.

The Marquise was not available to callers. I pushed the man aside and walked into the house, up the thickly carpeted stairway to the second floor and into the brilliantly lighted drawing-room. There were perhaps ten or twelve persons in it, men and women. The Marquise was sitting opposite the door between two attentive young men. Without waiting for questions, I stated my errand—an interview with the Marquise De B.; and to avoid the useless delay of argument, I added that the house was surrounded by gendarmes and unless instant compliance with my requests were forthcoming every person in the house would be immediately taken into custody. And at least one of their number would not return.

To carry conviction of the truth of my swashbuckling assertion I relied upon the Marquise's own consciousness of her activities as an international spy, and on the probability—almost a certainty—that her host was aware of her activities. It was good psychology. Neither the Marquise nor Monsieur S. spoke a word of remonstrance. The lady changed color. The rouge on her cheeks appeared a trifle too conspicuous for perfect artistry; her hands seemed for an instant to live independently of her will. They fluttered like startled doves, and came to rest beautifully on her

somewhat exposed bosom. My mind raced, I was prepared for eventualities, but confident of mastership.

"A private interview," I said harshly. She rose and passed me with a gesture toward a room at the end of the corridor. I sprang forward and throwing open the door made certain of the room's emptiness. The Marquise entered, I closed the door and faced her.

I hate dealing with women in matters of importance. I discover the utmost difficulty in taking them seriously, even homely women. The Marquise De B. was not homely. And she was badly frightened. She essayed to speak but gave up and biting her underlip stared at me with wide eyes. To this day I cringe under the lash of that woman's fear of me. Telling myself that I represented not a man but the Russian Empire, gives me no solace. She was afraid of me—the man! I used her fear to force the truth from her. No threats of death. She had faced death before, her own and her victims'. I said:

"There is a salve which if smeared over the face and wiped away takes the skin with it."

She shuddered and stepped away from me, still unable to articulate. I shook my head forcing a smile. It was necessary to reassure her at once. She would have

fainted from sheer terror. I assured her that there was no sentence against her, would be none in fact if——

She gasped at my pause, the blood suffused her cheeks obliterating the rouge; her teeth parted releasing the lower lip which showed a white streak slowly turning to red as I watched.

"If?" she said, half audibly.

"If," I said, "you give me the photograph and plate of the letter you delivered to Captain Lilienfield this evening, and which five minutes later I took from him."

The faintest flutter of tinted eyelids was the only sign that the shot had gone home. Time pressed. I said something banal about the rarity of feminine beauty, took out my watch and glanced at it. Said: "In five minutes——" My psychology was perfect. The reference to beauty brought back her terror. She wished me to turn my back. I shook my head, indicated the watch in my hand, snapped: "Be quick!"

From a receptacle high up under her skirt she took a silk card case and tossed it toward me. I caught it and without taking my eyes from her movements discovered a film and two prints each less than three inches by two. I said: "No more?" She shook her

head and in a sudden flow of words as indicative of terror as her silence had been, she assured me that I now held everything. I dropped my tone of irony and assuming one of brutality described the fate that awaited her if she were lying to me. To my relief her terror vanished. Her color became normal; her white hands fluttered wearily, reminding me again of tired doves after long flight. In a steady toneless voice she protested that she was not a fool; that she had nothing to gain and everything to lose by a lie. I bowed, more to hide the relief revealed in my eyes than to express belief.

Three days later I placed the restored letter, the photographs, and the plate in the hands of the exalted personage who had commanded me to obtain them.

CASE: T6539—7711
File D-13: cpr. trt. "F" and "E—1"

The Monomach Ring

From a Letter of D-13
To Prince G. Adilachvari

IN THE MEANTIME WHILE I WAS AWAY FROM RUSSIA, the Chief had ferreted out the facts. The thief was not poor Cecil S-W. as it turned out, but Gregory Rasputin, "Man of God," ex-horse thief. His purpose was, so far as it could be ascertained, to prevent delivery of the letter. One need not be imaginative to understand the Monk's horror at the suggestion of the abdication. However, with the letter once in his possession, apparently he could not resist the temptation to turn it into gold—though why he should have imagined gold to be of value to one who possessed, as he did, the whole Russian Empire is beyond conceiving. Nevertheless he sold the letter to the Honorable Cecil S-W. and then boasted to the Tzarina of his treachery; or at any rate told her of the Tzar's intentions and of the means by which he, Rasputin, had learned of them. What she said to the Tzar is not in the record. Some one must have told him of Cecil S-W.'s possession of the letter, however, for it is certain that it was the Tzar himself who summoned the

Marquise De B. and put in her hands the task of retrieving the letter for him. A mistake of course as the sequel so dramatically demonstrated. Whether or not he ordered the assassination of poor Cecil will in all probability never be known.

It became our business now to discover the source of the Tzar's resolve to abdicate in favor of Grand Duke Cyril. There was little doubt in my mind that the suggestion emanated directly from the Grand Duke himself, but the Chief had other views—views to which I gave heed only after he had consented to place the evidence in my hands. This evidence was convincing enough but uncorroborated and I began my investigations without delay.

I had scarcely got under way when an interruption occurred which threw our plans greatly awry. There was a ball to be given by the Hussars of St. Petersburg in honor of something or somebody—I have completely forgotten. All the celebrities of the stage including "La Belle Gitana," the famous Spanish danseuse, had accepted invitations. It was rumored that the Tzar and Tzarina would be present; a rumor which the Chief and I did not much heed. But the day before the evening set for the entertainment the Tzarina was

confined to her bed with an attack of influenza. Immediately the rumor became a certainty.

The Tzar was present attended by the entire court with the obvious exception of the Tzarina but including the Monk Rasputin, and a certain Madam K. for whom His Majesty had shown a liking which amounted to little less than infatuation.

I was there unofficially, backed by the Chief himself and four others of the inner circle of the Personal Court Branch. The ball room of the National Army Club was brilliantly decorated. The invitations had of course been strictly censored and every card carefully checked by the Political Police under General G. Nevertheless I spotted as usual among the guests a generous sprinkling of demi-mondaines, "captains of industry" with accentuated noses and over-dressed wives, four international spies, and a noted Polish anarchist. Bribery, of course, had admitted them all. It was useless to make a scene. There was practically no danger from any of them except the Pole, whose disguise was so clever that he had actually passed the Argus-eyed General Foullon of the City Police. General Foullon whatever his faults, was not open to bribery by an anarchist.

I stepped up to "Comrade Matek," which was the only one of his numerous aliases I could recall at the moment, and invited him to accompany me to the guard room, the invitation italicized by the muzzle of my Service .38 pressed hard against his ribs. He accepted without grace, and in the guard room I handed him over to Captain Massalsky, merely mentioning the fellow's name—Matek. Five minutes later back in the ballroom I caught faintly the sound of rifle shots wafted through the open windows from the direction of the guard house yard. I muttered *"Requiescat in Hades!"* and took a drink from my pocket flask to dispel a vision of a burlap sack dripping red.

The incident was blotted out immediately however by the announcement from the Master of Ceremonies and his buglers of the arrival of the Tzar of All Russias. He entered, His Majesty, already unsteady on his legs, flanked by the Black Monk on one side and Mme. K. on the other, and followed by the Court including the Guard and a retinue of servants. He was dressed appropriately enough in the uniform of Colonel-in-Chief of the Scots Greys, an honor of which he seemed curiously proud. One of the Imperial pages guided Rasputin to the kitchens and left him there to

enjoy gypsy songs with the servants and drink himself into a stupor from a pail of vodka which was placed at his side.

The ballroom was crowded, intensely hot and slightly fetid, a mixture of incense, cigar smoke and stale perfume. Ventilation Asiatic, plus Russian *nitchevo*. I looked about me. Baron M. of the Guards —a charming young man with promise, whom the Chief and I had had our eyes on with some hope—was talking earnestly to a Titian-haired beauty, the wife of the most popular man at Court. Prince O, her husband, stood on my right listening to La Belle Gitana, the Spanish danseuse. He was apparently infatuated, though he was too much a man of the world for his hidden emotions to be visible. He might be hating the talented Spanish lady, but if so, she would not know it. I turned back to Baron M. He, too, was infatuated, plainly so; too young, too sincere, too inexperienced to dissemble. I shrugged, disappointed; reflecting that Titian-haired beauties are at best costly, and wondered how much the young fool could raise by selling his ancestral chateau in Riga—or his honor! More likely the latter since it would very probably bring more, and could be sold over many times, till exposure —then disgrace, slow death, maggots! Why, one asks,

did not God place man's desires within his reach, or else——? But why speculate on God's vagaries while I had His Imperial Majesty's to speculate on?

I glanced at the Chief who was standing a few paces on my left dressed in a shabby evening suit and looking more like a waiter than the Tzar's most powerful servant. He seemed ill at ease and swore roughly, when passing him I whispered a pleasantry into his ear. I was not, strictly speaking, on duty but there to amuse myself. It was the Chief's business and General G.'s to attend His Majesty. I spied the Princess "Bobsie," the best ballroom dancer in St. Petersburg. His Majesty was dancing with La Belle Gitana and seemed steadier than on his arrival a half hour before. Princess Bobsie floated into my arms as I held them out to her, but I found her a decided burden instead of a fairy of delight. Her feet dragged and she leaned on me—would have fallen, if I had not held her up—as we circled the floor slowly, out of time and in everyone else's way. Back at our starting point I handed her over to her unfortunate husband into whose arms she promptly collapsed and was carried by him from the room. Morphine and green chartreuse—the penalty of society leadership.

Just before midnight the Master of Ceremonies an-

nounced that La Belle Gitana would dance the Fandango of Granada. I whistled under my breath and wondered whose bank account was to be emptied on the following morning. Trumpets blared. His Majesty ordered champagne. I made a wry face as did everyone about me. Then we all laughed. It was a standing joke in every chancellerie in Europe that the wine reserved for the Tzar of Russia was diluted to the point of tastelessness. His Majesty "carried his liquor" badly.

Cheers, cries, bursts of applause, gasps, greeted the Spanish danseuse when she came into the ballroom dressed, apparently, only in rubies and diamonds. She curtsied low before the royal guest, and he, filling her miniature dancing shoe with champagne gallantly drank her health. Then taking the Monamach ring of the Romanoff dynasty, a magnificent oblong, pigeon-blood ruby set in hammered Siberian gold, from his own finger, he slipped it on one of hers. It was evident that it had been promised as the price of the dance. In the ordinary course of events the heirloom of the Romanoff's would be returned to His Majesty's valet, Volkoff, within twenty-four hours at the utmost, while the lady would be hurried beyond the boundaries of the Russian Empire by the Political Police. The thing

had occurred more than once. A nuisance but otherwise unimportant. This time I had an unpleasant premonition that the affair would not prove so orthodox. There was an enigmatic look in the dancer's eyes as she glanced into mine; and the way her fingers closed so that the ring which was, of course, too large for her, might not slip off, was indicative of a temperament not easily controlled.

However, it was not my affair. A ruby more or less —the entire crown jewels—might be scattered to the four corners of the earth without causing so much as a ripple on the surface of my equanimity when my whole attention and activities were centered as they were in those days on the increasingly difficult task of stemming the tide of revolution. But my equanimity was destined to more than a mere ripple on its surface, and by this miserable if magnificent ruby ring.

The danseuse finished her fandango—nothing of the sort of course, but a vile dance of the underground cafés of Madrid—and retired amid thunders of applause. The Emperor left his exhausted hosts, his familiar shrill whistle sounding strangely through the "Last Waltz." I met General Foullon of the City Police in the empty banquet hall. He had nothing to report except the theft of some gold spoons, which was not

within my province. I laughed and suggested that the spoons would probably be returned with an insulting note from "Grisha" Rasputin, the Man of God! A prediction which was carried out to the letter. Explainable no doubt by a whim of a vodka-soaked mind reverting to its inbred passion for gold. We talked, General Foullon and I, spat our private brands of cynicism at each other, yawned in each other's faces and walked home, two gray-faced gentlemen in the gray dawn, each nursing a lively *cafard*.

Still dreaming of young men in the toils of the octopus, sex, I was aroused from my "beauty sleep" by the dzing of my Service telephone at my bedside. Automatically answering the call, I caught the words: "Spanish dancer murdered last night," and then General Foullon's exasperating laugh. I asked why he had troubled my rest since I suppose there were other Spanish dancers to take her place. He laughed again but intimated that it was not the murder that had prompted him to call me, and asked me to come at once.

A bath, a double of Bacardi and twenty minutes later a police sergeant escorted me through the lines of plain clothes men surrounding the hotel where La Belle Gitana had lived. General Foullon met me at the door

of her suite, shrugged his shoulders, whispered: *"Tiens! C'est drole ça, mon gamin!"* I muttered, nodded to the foreign correspondents gathered about like so many carrion birds and lighted a cigarette.

The body of the dancer lay on the floor in a cerise drawing-room. She still wore a fur coat of dark sables over her evening gown. From her throat protruded the hilt of a Bashkir hunting knife. Crimson drops formed a tiny circlet on the slightly puffed blueish skin. On a table stood a cup of black coffee and a box of Turkish cigarettes. No signs of a struggle; the room was in perfect order. Kneeling, I examined the body, noticing as I did so that the great Monomach ring was no longer on her finger. I rose and confronted General Foullon. So far it was a case for the City Police or the Criminal Investigation Department. Tugging and pulling at his beard with one hand he held out to me in the other a silver pendant, one of those "Love Beyond the Grave" atrocities of the eighteenth century; but inside the pendant I discovered a miniature portrait on ivory of young Baron M— of the Guards.

A gendarme had found it firmly clasped in the hand of the dead woman when called in by the half-hysterical maid who had discovered the body of her mistress.

I said: "Impossible! M— is not a cheap assassin!"

He shrugged and pointed to the "evidence" in my hand. I argued. He stood silent; then burst out: "Find the murderer! Otherwise—"

"Otherwise what?" I snapped.

"Otherwise Baron M— will be convicted." Then leaning close he whispered: "The ring"—Breaking off he made a characteristic Slavic gesture, a gesture indicative of despair, of futility, of impotence.

"The Ring?"

"The Monomach ring is missing," he continued to whisper.

"And you suspect M—?" I demanded.

He struck his breast with both doubled fists and shouted at me: "No!" Then pointing to the miniature which I still held, he said: "All the same that will convict him unless you find the thief!"

"Do you imply that I am a jeweler's detective?"

He threw up his hands and muttered "We shall all lose our heads!"

He was right. I said so, nodded, and left him. I was instantly determined that the young fool who had lost his soul to a head of Titian hair should not undergo the "interrogation *in extremis*" which was inevitable unless the Monomach ring was found. The death by

murder of a foreign danseuse was trivial enough. Whether the murderer were discovered or not mattered less than nothing. But the loss of a crown jewel was not a trivial matter; a thing of such importance in fact that in the search—until the ring came to light and the thief was punished—the trail would be crimson, and torture and death would be meted out with indiscriminate ruthlessness. From General Foullon down—and up, too, for that matter—the imperative idea was a victim. But I knew, and the Chief knew, that unless young M— were guilty and could produce the ring he would but head the list of victims. One out of the way, another must at once be found—and would be. The interruption of my activities in the effort to discover the source of the Tzar's resolve to abdicate was not to be considered beside the necessity to discover the whereabouts of the Monomach ring.

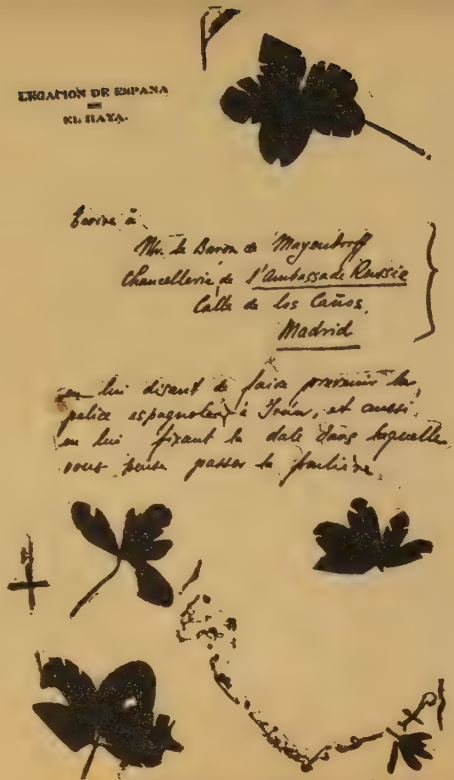
The Chief undertook to save Baron M— from "interrogation" by pledging the honor of the Service to His Majesty. He accomplished nothing. The Tzar's rage, no doubt largely induced by mortification, and fuelled by the Monk's incitements and the unceasing demands of the Tzarina, was fanatical. He commanded instant action. Baron M— was accused, tried and sentenced to forty years at "hard labor." The

jury which was selected by the Minister of the Interior consisted of twelve burly gendarmes of the special squad. An abortive attempt to have the prisoner represented by counsel was made by several influential officers of the Guard. It resulted in a fierce contest between justice and Tzarism. But the knout and the bayonet won. Then the Chief, by a ruse as ingenious as any in the annals of the Service, got himself appointed as Examining Magistrate Extraordinary to cross examine the prisoner in secret. This placed us in the position of "finding it necessary" to order a "stay of execution until certain matters learned from the prisoner are cleared up under secret investigation." This gave us time, almost indefinite time, in fact, in which to discover the ring if not the thief. The ring once restored, Baron M's. "escape" could be managed without difficulty. The Tzar's rages were as quickly dissipated as incited, provided his inordinate vanity was appeased.

While the Chief was waging this intensive fight, I was for my part on the track of the ruby. I selected one hundred of my best undercover men—traitors all, to both sides as a rule, and so to themselves; though that phase of their indulgence never penetrated to their oddly constructed minds. This time however, I

guarded against their treachery to me by promise of reward far exceeding anything any one of them could possibly obtain by treachery. I slept badly those nights. Cigarettes and black coffee, antidotes for Bacardi and green chartreuse! Had Baron M's life alone been at stake I could not have afforded the time and energy thus squandered in the search. But with the visions constantly before my mind of the blood and agony which would accompany the investigation if left in the hands of the *Ochrana* and directed chiefly by Gregory Rasputin, I could not do otherwise. The revolution, like a colossal snake compounded of such bloodshed and torture as the world had never yet encountered, crawled toward us, swelling its mighty bulk day by day on just such orgies of injustice and stupid cruelty as these "investigations" and "interrogations" invariably produced.

Three days and nights of intensive efforts without progress. Poe, Stevenson, Gaboreau, Doyle—clues from a cigarette butt, a hair pin, a scrap of paper, a shoe string, from the blue sky! Wax wings of the imagination! Day after day my operators, every man with long years to his credit, reported failure to find a clue. In all sorts of disguises, filthy, commonplace, I combed St. Petersburg and discovered nothing more



TRANSLATION

SPANISH LEGATION
AT
THE HAGUE

Write to:

M. le Baron de Mayendorff
Chancellerie of the Russian
Embassy
Caños Street, Madrid

Telling him to warn the Spanish Police at Irún, and also to fix the date (with him) when you intend to pass the frontier.

The code message in the clips of the clover leaves, reads as follows:

D. 13 of the Personal Court Branch of Russian Secret Service will confer with Operator L.X.11., resident agent, Madrid. Special attention to keep under constant surveillance Marquis de B. Pedigree Marquis contains Spy record. Message ends.

CHIEF.

Original and translation of letter containing a secret code message.

interesting than a new Chinese opium den, two laboratories for making high explosives, a set of platinum teeth belonging to old Countess T., a pearl necklace worth about twenty thousand rubles (the loss of which had not yet been reported), but not even a shadow of a clue to what I was in search of. I made no arrests, no reports. Then one evening—it was raining cats and dogs—a message from General Foullon of the City Police sent me flying to his Headquarters.

Among the fences arrested during a sporadic raid by the City Police was a young Hebrew jeweler. The police had found in his shop a ruby ring, identical with that General Foullon "remembered" having seen on the hand of the Spanish danseuse. I had been sent for on account of my proficiency in the Jewish language, not because my services were needed in any official capacity. The young Jew was not pleasant to look upon. Knouts dipped in salt water are not beautifyers. I gave him an injection of specially prepared morphine which eased the pain and stimulated the heart action noticeably. He talked, bloody bubbles spraying the filthy pillow, a whisper of anguish through smashed lips. He was too far gone to give a coherent account of the matter, however. A typical example of the gross stupidity of the Political Police

methods. Render a man incapable of speech and then question him! Blood lust born of a deep subconscious fear.

I took the young man to my own home and in five hours with the help of Dr. Sokoloff and a nurse had his story as follows:

The evening before a man with a military bearing but dressed rather shabbily had entered his shop late at night. The stranger's face was muffled in a scarf, but he was tall and muscular and on his right cheek, which showed for a moment when his scarf had slipped down, the young jeweler noticed a red scar. The stranger offered several pieces of jewelry for sale, one at a time, but for each he asked much more than the jeweler had means to pay. They were all of a magnificence which produced great astonishment in the young man's mind, and of unquestionable genuineness as he had taken pains to discover. Then the ruby ring was offered and after some haggling as to price the stranger accepted the jeweler's offer of five thousand rubles, which was not much more than one-tenth of one percent of the ring's market value. The jeweler had not expended on the ruby the same close examination he had given the other jewels, chiefly because their genuineness had allayed his suspicions. But after the stranger

had gone he examined it with greater care and was chagrined to discover that he had been swindled. The stone was an excellent imitation but not worth a twentieth of what he had paid for it. He put the ring away in his safe and was on the point of closing his shop when the police arrived. He had tried madly, desperately, to tell them the ruby was an imitation, but they gave him no chance whatever, striking him in the mouth every time he opened it to speak.

With the connivance of Dr. Sokoloff, I managed to keep the young man out of their hands until I had had an opportunity to have the ring examined by an expert. The expert's report corroborated the young Jew, who was reluctantly allowed to go without further tortures. The Monomach heirloom was still to be recovered.

In spite of its call on my time and energy away from matters of grave importance, I was beginning to be interested. The affair had taken on the color of something more than a mere theft. Who could be the man with the red scar (very likely a manufactured one deliberately shown to the jeweler as a blind) who had so much valuable jewelry to dispose of? And why had anyone resorted to the difficult and extraordinarily risky length of securing a close replica in paste of the Monomach ring? Why—?

The service telephone on my desk rang insistently. A quite normal habit of telephones, but never fully effective save when one does not wish to be disturbed. I ignored the jangle for a time but finally gave in. The Chief's voice came to my ear conveying language that should have melted the wires. My way of driving a car through the city area was simplicity itself. A mile a minute—pedestrians and dogs keep to the walk or suffer the consequences. Skid—jolt stop. Too much in a hurry for the slow lift, I dashed up the Chief's private stairway spitting the password into the bewildered sentry's face as I flung him and his crossed rifle out of my way. In the library the Chief exploded a collection of oaths that would have withered ears less hardened to blasphemy than mine, snapped a sharp dismissal to the veteran stenographer and when that wise old bird had discreetly retired, cooled down enough to produce an envelope from the files marked "D.13 at. cpr."

I read, swore choicely, choosily, glanced at the clock, stamped the envelope 12:15 p. m., then sitting down studied the letter more carefully. It was a communication from the Military Commander of the Court to the Governor of the prison in which Baron M. was confined ordering immediate execution of the sentence

—Siberian mines—*after* an "interrogation," and was initialed by the Tzar "N. I." Immediately beneath these initials was scratched the following words:

"At once, you swine. Report to me the names of any persons protesting. Unless you wish to be sent to Siberia and fed on stinking fish. This is my order. I am the power."

It was signed: "Rasputin, friend of Nicholashka, Alexandria, Tatiana, Olga, Maria, and Anastasia. Savior of Alexis."

The Chief glanced at me with bloodshot eyes, his face purple with rage. I laughed. The Black Monk had long endeavored to discover the identity of the personnel of 333 R (the White Branch). This was obviously but another attempt, and a bungling one, since the "interrogation" he ordered would be under the auspices of the Chief as Examining Magistrate Extraordinary. I pointed this out. The Chief kicked viciously at an ottoman and said:

"That is arranged. Baron M. was provided with a revolver by one of his friends. He is dead. A clean death, thank God!"

I ceased to be amused. This Rasputin! The Chief and I talked calmly, came to a decision, made our plans and set them in motion. From that moment

Death stalked the footsteps of Gregory Rasputin, ex-horse thief; but immediate action in this respect was not thinkable. The trail of blood which would deepen and widen until the Monomach ruby was once more in the Tzar's possession had begun. While we still talked, the lights on the code board began to flash. A message had been received and decoded by the secretaries on the ground floor. The message read:

"Diamond and emerald pendant in form of eagle with (outspread) wings. Slavonic letter A erased and Roman K substituted. Sold in Paris by man conspicuous scar on right cheek. Pendant held by S. of Sûreté Général. Advise. I-14.x.3."

I knew now that the scar was a blind. Had it been genuine it would have been concealed instead of "conspicuous." The Chief suggested a scan of the absentees. When the list was produced we discovered only two of the Court circle: Madame K., the momentary favorite of the Tzar; and Prince O. Madame's departure for Paris and the Riviera had taken place the day following the Hussar's Ball. The Prince's three days ago. The whereabouts of the Prince were "unknown."

A sudden memory, like a vision, of the last time I had seen Prince O. flashed before my mind's eye. He was talking with the Spanish danseuse at the Hussar's

Ball. "Infatuated" had been my mental comment, I recalled; and also that one could not be certain of the emotions hid behind that dark mask of sophistication. His would answer the description the Hebrew jeweler had given of the man with the scar. His attentions to Madame K. had been all but a scandal, till the Tzar had cast the cloak of his favor on her fair shoulders.

The Chief's eyes met mine in a long stare. We went over it piece by piece, coming at last to the young Baron M.'s infatuation for the Titian-haired wife of Prince O.! The puzzle fell together, each part slipping neatly into its appointed slot. It remained now only to discover whether the Prince was in need of ready money. At a confidential interview with his bankers that afternoon I learned that his debts were at the least double his available assets.

Nothing for it but a dash to Paris. A dash I could ill afford, with time more precious than gold and rubies! I thought so, at any rate, As if either time, or gold and rubies were of *any* value!—as if time or gold and rubies could stem the juggernaut of Fate—God — Circumstance — Chance — Progress — Evolution—in this instance spelled with an R! Who knows?

By the time I reached Paris our agent, I.14.x.3. had already discovered that Madame K. was living quietly

in an obscure flat near the Rue de la Tremouille, and under the "pseudonym" of Princess Nina Chávbádze, of Tiflis. Also that twice since the discovery of her name and domicile by our man, Prince O. had visited her, each time eluding observation when leaving the flat—the last time only two days ago.

I sought Monsieur A. of the Sûreté Général, a *grippe-coquin* of the old school and a collaborator with me in one of my most interesting cases, not many years before. A small man with powerful shoulders and long arms, he was enamored of his vocation. His methods smacked of the histrionic, and he enjoyed nothing so much as a detail in which a good old-fashioned rough-and-tumble could be induced as the means to his ends. My methods were of course widely different, and in my present assignment neither histrionic nor rough-and-tumble were the appropriate means to be employed. However, one does what one is allowed to do, bending always with the winds of circumstance.

Monsieur A. welcomed me with Gallic courtesy tinged with the inevitable exaggerations his temperament imposed upon his every action. One could not but wonder if his wife hated, or perhaps adored him, with extravagance. It would be one or the other

emotion; nothing in between! As for me, I had neither time nor mind for any emotion save that I reserved for Prince O. whom I was now completely convinced was the thief of the Monomach ring, and the virtual murderer of young Baron M. As soon as the atmosphere of welcome (during which we talked of every conceivable subject under the high heavens except of course my object in seeking him out) had subsided to a semblance of normality, I told Monsieur A. my errand—gave him exact details, and impressed him with the vital need of haste. Monsieur A. was delighted beyond measure. He laughed, clapped his hands, twisted his mustachios, thumped himself on the chest, said:

"In presenting me with your difficulty, you have perhaps solved one of mine. Now it is my turn. Come! This way! Follow! Give me your arm. I will show you a place—a cabaret—"Le Saperlopopinette." Come —we shall walk. It is near Les Halles—a long way, but we are a trifle early."

We set out, arm in arm, like two (rather gray) young bachelors, on a quest for adventure. As we proceeded he outlined his own case to me. This "Le Saperlopopinette," was, it seemed, a relic of the by-gone Apache cabarets; Sanctuary for the Brotherhood of the Knife;

nothing in common with the tourist variety. The proprietor of the place was a certain "Papa Cric-Crac," an ex-prize fighter—cauliflower ears, broken nose, no front teeth. Monsieur A's description was of a stage character; nothing less! Employed at the cabaret was a *diseuse* of no fame or fortune—a "natural" entertainer for such places. Two days ago it was reported that this girl at one of her appearances at the cabaret had worn a diamond and emerald necklace of approximately eighty stones, the whole if genuine, worth in the neighborhood of, say, 300,000 francs. No such theft had been reported to the police; the necklace was therefore considered imitation until proved otherwise. From what I had told him, Monsieur A. concluded that the necklace wanted proving one way or the other. At any rate, "We should see what we should see!"

We entered the place, on not too steady legs, and called for absinthe. "Papa Cric-Crac" approached and eyed us. I took him in and decided that Monsieur A. had understated rather than exaggerated the man's appearance.

He served us himself, cautioned us that he was not responsible for our coats, watches and other valuables —"and no *cochonnerie* with the girls—*Pattes sur les tables, mes braves!*"

We sat down, sipped our absinthes, bought boutonnières from the one-eyed *fleuriste;* smoked, drank and hiccoughed, while I covertly studied the place and the two or three dozen men and women who occupied the other tables and the lounge seats at either end of the room. It was not an alluring resort for a fastidious taste! I pretended to sleep—waking with a start of sudden interest when the *diseuse* appeared on a row of tables in front of the buffet, her naked body gleaming softly against the black velvet curtain of the makeshift stage. About her throat was a short necklace of diamonds and emeralds—one I had seen often enough before, round that of the Tzarina; or perhaps an exceedingly clever imitation?

In either case the necklace was important, and the girl's deposition imperative. Monsieur A. glanced at me. I inclined my head. He rose and with a quick movement placed the table on its side and dropped behind its round iron top, at the same time pulling me down beside him. Pistol bullets with a sound like hail stones on glass struck the top of the table and fell harmlessly to the floor. All of a sudden the room seemed overcrowded. Panic reigned. I grappled with a putty-faced Apache who was on the edge of throwing a knife at Monsieur A.'s exposed head, while the

gendarmes wrought havoc with their clubs and knuckle dusters. It was a short fight—one of the best in my life! I picked myself up from the debris of broken bottles and glasses, wiped the blood and messy liquor from my hands, and looked about me.

Monsieur A. placed the necklace in my hand, and with a satisfied smirk, said: "We shall interrogate the young lady after she is more modestly arrayed."

Each service had its characteristic methods. Ours differed from that of the French. The results were however approximately the same. When information was wanted it was, sooner or later, forthcoming. The results in this case were simple enough. The necklace —which proved to be genuine—had been given to the cabaret *diseuse* by the fence who had bought it from "A man with a conspicuous red scar on his right cheek." The sum paid 100,000 (?) francs. The following morning, accompanied by Monsieur A., I interviewed the Princess Nina Chávbádze" at her cosy little flat near the Rue de la Tremouille. She was an exceedingly pretty woman with a peculiarly magnetic allure, quite unexplainable by her outward attractions, which though considerable were scarcely more than one sees a dozen or more times a day in any cosmopolitan city like Paris, or London, or St. Petersburg.

She was very angry at our intrusion. It was not precisely a happy interview. The "Princess" did not insist upon her pseudonym after the first five minutes, but she did refuse to answer my questions. Also, she threatened me with the Tzar's extreme displeasure. With the utmost gravity I pointed out to her that the affair had become international and that His Imperial Majesty's displeasure, though it might well destroy me, could not protect either her or her accomplice. Also that her only means of escape lay in complete frankness; the alternative being a French prison and French methods of gaining the necessary information. At this, Monsieur A. seemed to swell to double his natural bulk, his mustachios bristled—one could almost imagine a sound of crackling sparks—like those on occasion from a high voltage electric cable. Madame K. collapsed into a chair and burst into hysterical weeping.

Ten minutes later I was in possession of all she had to tell. She had not a single jewel of value in her possession. She had given them all to Prince O. before leaving St. Petersburg. She was almost without funds. The Prince had, he told her, encountered great difficulty in disposing of the jewels. His apartments were on the top floor of the second house to the left and

could be reached through the cellars which connected the three houses together. His alias was Baron Karl Von Pohlen. I accepted the story and made no search, but "requested" Madame K. to confine herself to her flat until she should receive permission from Monsieur A. to leave it.

I undertook the discovery and search of Prince O.'s rooms myself, leaving Monsieur A. to attend to the unhappy lady—an assignment he seemed peculiarly pleased to undertake.

The passage through the cellars was made easier by the fact that obstructions had been removed, presumably by the Prince's orders. I made my way with caution, however, for it was not an impossibility that I might meet Prince O. at any moment—a meeting which I was certain would end in disaster for my mission if I were caught unaware.

As a matter of record, I met no one until I reached the top floor of the "second house to the left." There a maid just emerging from a doorway, with a pail of slops in either hand, answered my inquiry for the Baron Van Pohlen with a jerk of her head toward a door at the end of the hall. I knocked on the door, received no answer, knocked again, tried the latch; the door was locked. I recalled the maid who was by this

time half way down the steep flight of stairs, and bade her open the door. "I am of the police," I told her. At this she dropped both pails and dashed down the stairs, making sounds which comically resembled those of a frightened puppy. I laughed, swore and after some manipulation managed to pick the lock with the aid of my pocket knife and a skeleton key I invariably carried about me.

I made a rapid inspection of the rooms—there were three. No one in them. The furniture was the usual sort of thing one finds in a furnished lodging of the better kind: a bed, some chairs, an ottoman, a chest of drawers in the bedroom; a table, a sideboard, chairs and a clock on the mantel in the Salon; a table, chairs and a glass cabinet in the reception room. In a cupboard near the door of the bedroom were a small trunk and three leather valises. I closed and locked the outer door, noticing as I did so that both hinges and lock had recently been oiled.

Then I went through the luggage, but found nothing of importance until I opened the smallest of the three valises—about the size and shape of a portable typewriter case. In this, packed in cotton wool, were the jewels I had come to find, some in boxes, some

merely wrapped in thin paper. I dumped them all out on the bed and spread them about in the hope of spying the Monomach ring. My hopes were realized. I made an exclamation of mixed relief and triumph, and at that moment—intuitively; a slight sound perhaps—became aware that I was not alone.

Without hesitation I glanced over my shoulder. Prince O. stood in the doorway, a service revolver leveled in my direction; a smile of the utmost satisfaction on his handsome dark face.

He said: "Put up your hands!"

I obeyed mechanically. He stepped closer—to within three feet of me—the pistol muzzle almost touching my chest. Then, quietly but with a certain suppressed excitement he told me he had long suspected my connection with the Secret Service, and had planned this whole affair on the theory that I would be the one selected to follow him. He paid me the compliment of declaring that I was the only man in the entire Service of whom he had had a moment's fear, and added, by way of taking down my conceit, that he had scarcely hoped to trap me with such extreme ease!

"A burglar caught in the act of robbery and shot down in self-defense as he drew his weapon with

intention to commit murder!" His smile broadened, but with an added touch of venom, as he said these words.

Till then I had not spoken. Now as he paused, I said: "Quite, but before you 'defend' yourself from my murderous attack, please satisfy a harmless curiosity which has haunted me ever since the discovery in St. Petersburg of the replica of the Monomach ring."

He laughed, and drew back a foot or two, but still kept his revolver muzzle aimed directly at my heart. He said: "Jews are suspicious vermin. I had hoped the imitation ruby would reach His Majesty before the substitution was discovered; but that filthy Jew was suspicious even after testing a million rubles' worth of stones!" The smile vanished and his lips drew back in a snarl of anger as he rasped out: "But it was you, nevertheless, who brought that about! If you had not been sent for they would have killed the miserable jeweler and no one would ever have suspected that the ruby was not genuine——"

Choked with rage he raised his arm—the pistol touched my chest. Deliberately I looked past him and gave the slightest of nods—as though signaling to someone behind him. He wheeled, wheeled back, and fired wildly as I dashed my shoulder against his knees.

He went down on his face with a crash. The revolver hurtling across the room and knocking over a vase of artificial flowers.

The affair occupied but a split second. I had him in a vise, his arms pinned behind him, my knee in the small of his back. Holding his wrists in my left hand I reached under his chin with my right and gave his head a sudden upward wrench, into which I put all my strength. There was a sharp crack like the snap of a whip. Prince O.'s neck was broken. (An old trick I had learned years before in Africa.)

I rose and going to the window opened it, lifted the body, slid it across the sill and let go.

Verdict: "Death by misadventure."

Before the end of the week the Monomach ring glittered dully on His Majesty's finger, and the pendant in the form of an eagle with outspread wings was safely back in the Tzarina's jewel case, the Slavonic A once more enthroned in the place from which it had been deposed by the Roman K. The rest of the jewels discovered in the Prince's effects after "the sad accident which deprived Russia of one of her most popular princes," amounting to something over five million rubles in value (gifts from the Tzar to Madame K) were "returned" to the Princess O. The silence

of Madame K. was assured by a half dozen letters from her to the late Prince, which were also discovered among his effects, and delivered to Princess O. with the jewels.

Two nobles dead, a princess mourning a lover and a husband, an exalted lady ruined and compelled to sell herself in order to live in a foreign country, her own being closed to her. This was the price exacted by the man who in a half drunken moment had bestowed on a Spanish dancing girl one of the conspicuous jewels of the Russian crown!

Case: "O" 223311—0066
File D-13: at. cpr.—"34" "M"

Moon of Jade

From a Letter of D-13
To Mlle. C. De Bredeuille

IT WAS NOW SUMMER. THE TZAR ANNOUNCED HIS INtention of spending three months in Livadia, "The Pearl of the Black Sea." Society and the *nouveaux riches* of Moscow and St. Petersburg moved *en masse* to the beautiful summer resort. For me, nothing to do but follow. Not that I made any objection; on the contrary. My twin screw yacht *Nirvana* was anchored at the port of Yalta. I visioned an opportunity to enjoy a rest while at the same time pursuing my investigations into the origin of the Tzar's resolve to abdicate, and incidentally the murder of our Austrian agent in the "Christ of the Steppes" affair. Picture then my disappointment, not to speak of any other emotions—such as rage—when after the 1500-mile train journey from St. Petersburg I arrived at Yalta only to find a wire from the Chief recalling me at once. To save time I was to meet him at Moscow—"Approximately half way" as he put it; the approximation being some half a thousand miles in his favor!

"Why, in God's name, did I ever enter the Service?"

I asked myself with feeling, when my only genuine ambition in the world was to cultivate English potatoes in my steppe orchard! Turning my back to the water so that I might not be tempted beyond my strength by a sight of my beloved yacht, I drove straight to the station and took the first train out of Yalta. I arrived in Moscow, in no jesting mood; nor indeed was the Chief, when after a bath and the first edible meal I had had since leaving St. Petersburg a full week before, I shook hands with him at Moscow Headquarters. It was evident that he was greatly worried. He smoked and swore, telephoned, gave contradictory orders and hunted continually for his elusive toupee. Meanwhile I perused the official dossier of the case he had brought with him from St. Petersburg.

Some three or four weeks ago the houses of Bishop Meletios and Father Alexander Voronin, in Kieff, had been entered and ransacked. In both cases nothing of value had been taken, but the houses bore evidence of having been systematically searched inch by inch. So thorough was the search that the City Police suspecting "A new organization of foreign anarchists" stopped all investigations and turned the matter over to the Political Police. These, however, had accomplished nothing, and the Holy Synod had publicly de-

clared the Ministry of the Interior "incompetent to the point of danger to the Empire."

I could see nothing to get excited about in this and said as much. I was advised to read further. I did. The night before the Chief had wired to me at Yalta, the house of Brother Paul, a young, decidedly popular, not to say famous, person in St. Petersburg, was entered and positively turned inside out. Brother Paul was, it seemed, absent on a mission to the coal regions of the Don Basin and the Kalmouk steppes.

My interest in the whole damnable business—until I read this item—had been completely minus; at this point, however, the mercury began to rise. Brother Paul had had an unusual career, and, as it happened, had drawn the attention of the Service. Born of humble parents in a little fishing village on the north Russian coast, he had come to St. Petersburg quite unknown. In time, however, he made such progress in ecclesiastical circles, that he was a marked man. It was said of him that when in the pulpit, his voice, harsh and metallic, had the ring of power, a strange uncanny power. His sermons were brilliant, daring, while at the same time mystical. The words clutched at one's heart, stirring mysteriously all sorts of dormant ideas, ambitions, aspirations. In spite of your-

self you responded with a rising enthusiasm. Aesthetically speaking they—these sermons—carried all the earmarks of spontaneous sincerity beside a certain *élan* which made them—and bid fair to make the man—famous. I had never heard him preach, and had not taken the accounts I had heard with any seriousness whatever, except as they seemed to resemble in some respects accounts of Gregory Rasputin's career and power. But recently, within the past two or three months, a rumor had reached our ears that this young monk was beginning to advocate the doctrine then preached and practised by Rasputin and his satellites, the doctrine of Khlysty. That meant salvation through repentance only and, by a logical analysis, the necessity for sin in order to create something of which to repent. This rumor, coming at a time when I was up to my eyes in work of inescapable importance had aroused on my part no more than a cynical smile and shrug. Besides this, the stupidity and offensive arrogance of the Holy Synod had so filled me with disgust that Church affairs were anathema to me.

I finished reading the dossier, slammed it on the desk, and said: "Who cares?"

After a pause of some seconds, punctured by a dozen or so expletives in French, the Chief, all the while

glaring ferociously at his manicured nails, offered me one of his famous *Régies*. That spoke volumes. It meant nothing less than an acknowledgment that he was decidedly up a tree with the bark off, and had no means of descending without my assistance. Well then, if he could afford to show feeling most surely I could . . . I took the cigarette.

The Chief, not so swayed by disgust, as I, had always kept track of the activities of the Holy Synod, and in this connection, of Brother Paul. There had arisen, it seemed, a suspicion in the minds of the Holy Synod—how well or ill-founded was not forthcoming—that the Church of Rome was carrying on a subterranean effort to undermine the Orthodox Church in Russia. Brother Paul in his sermons had been especially severe in dealing with the theological claims of the Roman Church. Because of his attitude he was chosen by the Synod to investigate the suspicious activities of the Roman Clergy in Russia, but at the source—that is to say, in Rome itself. There he established—or claimed to have established—(the Secret Service was not interested in his success or failure, but only in his activities) connections with individuals close to the Vatican, and demanded enormous sums of money from the Synod, ostensibly as rewards to his informants. The sums

were forwarded, whereupon Brother Paul set up an establishment "commensurate with his office as representative of the Holy Synod"—the last thing on earth he was expected or desired to do, by his employers! He was immediately recalled and repudiated, though not disgraced. His old admirers and followers in St. Petersburg welcomed him back, almost worshipped him as a saint, and made great point of his "martyrdom" by the Holy Synod. His popularity and influence grew daily. The churches in which he was announced to preach were compelled to limit admission by issuing cards. The Synod soon withdrew its repudiation and began to show much the same servility toward Brother Paul as they had long shown toward Rasputin. They went so far indeed as to appoint his nominee Voronin, to succeed the retiring Hermogen, an appointment which was never confirmed, for when Hermogen learned of it, he refused to retire. Whereupon Brother Paul preached a vituperative sermon blaming the Synod for its weak position in relation to the Church of Rome, and demanding the knout or Siberia for the Roman representatives.

This aroused the Chief to action. His first move, purely as a blind, of course, was the invasion and search of the two Priests' houses in Kieff. His next

to induce Brother Paul to take up a mission to the Don Basin. He did not work through ecclesiastical authorities but used one of his cleverest operators, M.O. 201-6-C. a woman of unusual attractions and unqualified depravity. The turning inside out of Brother Paul's house in St. Petersburg followed immediately upon his departure with Countess V.-D., and the evidence that necessitated my gentle insinuation into the case was secured. This evidence consisted of lists of names, some of which represented persons of high rank. Opposite each name was a notation by Brother Paul cataloguing that person's especial sexual tendency, and under this the monk's own comments. There were also a dozen or more letters from women, a Princess among them, begging permission to join the "Inner Temple" and offering themselves for the "Secret Rites."

Copies of these documents had been made and the originals replaced. A few days later, for no other pur pose than to draw the Holy Synod, the Chief addressed a secret memorandum establishing beyond a doubt an unsavory episode in Brother Paul's life. The response to this was immediate and took the form of an unprecedented alliance of the Holy Synod with the Political Police; not, as one might imagine, for the purpose

of securing evidence against Brother Paul, nor for the protection of the people—or the Church—but for the amazing purpose of circumventing the Secret Service! It was wholly incredible save on the theory of blackmail. Obviously, then, Brother Paul held some knowledge of incriminating activities either past, present or future of the Holy Synod. A pretty affair indeed!

With this alliance completed, the Synod made a demand for the apprehension of the person or persons who had entered Brother Paul's house, at the same time with threats of an appeal to the Throne—meaning of course Gregory Rasputin. This threat would ordinarily have caused scarcely more than a shrug from the Chief, but in this case required attention, since it was the ex-horse thief himself we wished to involve; and though it was well known that the two, Rasputin and Paul, had quarrelled, there were good enough reasons to believe they were still in some sort of alliance against the Dynasty.

Opportunely, several international spies had lately been apprehended along the German and Austrian border. Accordingly, the outraged Holy Synod was quieted by a report from the frontier to the effect that four men attempting to cross into Austria had been arrested, and under interrogation had confessed enter-

ing the houses of Church dignitaries. "Motive: search for compromising documents concerning Russian Orthodox Church, with the purpose of selling same to the Church of Rome." All four were knouted to death.

Meanwhile the Chief was engaged on a matter which concerned the Tzarina; another attempt on her part, in connivance with the German Emperor, to involve Russia and Germany against France. He had also uncovered an incipient plot on the part of four persons of the highest rank to depose Nicholas II and by a coup d'etat seize the throne. The nobles engaged in this plot were without exception sworn enemies of the Black Monk, a fact which immunized them against exposure, since the Service was completely in sympathy with their motives, if not with their methods. In addition, the revolutionary activities of one, Vladimir Lenin, were gaining ground and required attention. Pile on top of these that the Tzar was controlled by a bloc of reactionaries headed by Rasputin. Then cap the pyramid with the phrase: Time pressed! Time pressed! Time pressed!

The Chief and I parted, after expressions of mutual esteem and self-appreciation. Next day in my private "lab" in St. Petersburg, while working on my secret

formulæ for the composition of fertilizers which might enrich the chalky soil of my Ukraine orchards, I worked out my plans somewhat as follows: If the situation was as grave as it appeared to be, nothing was so effective as a woman—the right sort of woman—as an aid to further knowledge of the young monk's activities. I put my brain to the task of finding the woman. It might seem simple enough to use one of our female operators. Not the best way. First, too much time consumed in working into the monk's confidence. Second, danger (always a danger with women operators) of her becoming enamored of the prey. The woman I wanted was one who was already in his confidence and was on the point of being ready to betray him. To this end I picked one hundred of the best from the shadow squad. These men were known in the Service as "Hell benders" and were beyond praise. Their discretion was complete. Their tact, suave. Their ability, unqualified. Their courage, flawless. Their integrity, guarded by the circumstances of their employment. This last may best be expressed by the old Spanish proverb "Trust only him whose interest is identical with your own." These men had been picked by this formula.

I put L.X. 11 in command and mentioned the name

of Brother Paul. From that moment I received hourly reports of the monk's movements, his visits, his visitors, his menage, his services, sermons, clerical associates, his mail, both outgoing and incoming (copies in code). Not till the fifth day however did a single item of importance or potential interest appear. On that day the name of an acknowledged leader of the younger set in St. Petersburg, Baroness Nina Von Stetterling occurred in a rather startling manner. She had been seen to enter Brother Paul's house at 5.03 p. m. on Friday and had not left the house up till that moment, 5.03 p. m. the following Monday. Inquiries at the Baroness's home had elicited the information that her husband was in Moscow on military duty, the Baroness visiting friends at Oranienbaum.

Without difficulty, through the army branch, I had an announcement inserted in the "Novoye Vremya" that Captain Baron von Stetterling had been recalled to St. Petersburg, and a copy of this sheet was sent to the monk's establishment. This brought the affair to Wednesday. That same evening the Baroness left the monk's house by a back entrance and was driven to her own house in a cab, picked up at the corner of the street. I was on the point of seeking an interview with the Baroness when my attention was

distracted from that charming young woman by an intercepted letter from Brother Paul, addressed to Mlle. Yvette Chang in Rome, Italy. The letter was in code, which proved after some examination, to be the L.5 "block," used by the Political Police in communicating with their agents abroad. It was typewritten and unsigned. Decoded it ran as follows:

> "Your agents have tried and failed. I am awake. Bishop M., Father Alexander V., pawns in your game. My humble home yielded nothing when ransacked. I still hold documents containing evidence that will ruin the highest dignitaries of the Orthodox Church. Terms? The same as before *and* your body."

The word "and" was heavily underscored. I laughed cynically and quoted a line from Ophelia's song in Hamlet. I had only to turn this revealing tid-bit over to the Holy Synod to send our young monk to Siberia. Whatever the cause of their fear of him they could not fail to prosecute, since in such event the Service would be compelled to. However, public scandal must be avoided at all costs. Beside, a completer extinction than mere exile was imperative in this instance, and in the back of my mind, the Chief's also, was the hope that at least indirectly Gregory Rasputin might be involved.

I wired 777-I. in Rome, as follows:

"Yvette Chang."
D.13

The reply reached headquarters that evening. "X-C-0044-6-C" which meant that the woman was already in our "pedigree" files. I consulted cabinet X-C file 0044 pedigree 6-C. and read as follows:

"Yvette Chang, alias Moon of Jade. Franco Chinese. Circus rider. F-Freelance spy AA. See Case 044-909-W- and W.B."

Immediately I hunted up Case 044-909, etc., and discovered that Yvette Chang was considered a beauty of the brunette type, had been the close companion of Brother Paul while the latter was in Rome. Also she had been the go-between in his alleged dealings with the Vatican. When questioned by an agent of 777-I. she had denied any knowledge of the monk's affairs. If she was in love with him, she had dissembled well. The conclusion drawn by 777-I was that she expected further employment by Brother Paul and therefore did not wish her plans interfered with. That was all except that the double A after the words "Freelance Spy" meant "ability of the first rank in this field." The F. before the words meant French, of course.

Silently I congratulated the Service on its efficiency. "Moon of Jade"—a charming conceit. Circus rider—not so charming. Franco Chinese—not at all charming. "Freelance"—positively revolting! All the same, here was my woman. A double A., experienced; and in Brother Paul's own words, he wanted her! I decided that Brother Paul was not versed in polite forms. His letter badly wanted revising. I went to work on it, and without difficulty produced the following:

"My house ransacked by agents of Vatican. They found nothing. The documents were not in the house. I possess evidence that will ruin the highest dignitaries of the Orthodox Church. Obtain best offer possible. I trust you, no one else. I will deliver documents to you only. Answer."

I placed the revision of Brother Paul's letter in its original envelope, sealed and sent it to Rome by one of my men. Posing as a messenger direct from Brother Paul, my man delivered the letter to Mlle. Chang. She wired in code to Brother Paul for time and place of delivery of documents. This wire reached the monk via one of my operators in the dress of a telegraph boy, who took Brother Paul's reply, which read:

"Lavra St. George. Sergiyevo October 24."

Some days later M. 33 reported a telephone conversation between Brother Paul and Baroness Osken-Saden in which the Baroness agreed to employ Yvette Chang as French governess for her youngest child. Arrangements were then agreed upon for a meeting of the two women at Sergiyevo some time in October. This did not suit my plans. I wanted Mlle. Chang's services at once. I wired to her in the code used by Brother Paul.

> "Change of plans necessitated by activities Vatican agents in Sergiyevo. Meet me Kremlin. Moscow 5 p. m. Monday week. Answer."

No answer came, but a wire from my man in Rome informed me that Mlle. Chang was on her way north. She had booked for Vienna. I booked for Moscow, where, on my arrival, I received intelligence of Mlle. Chang's departure from Vienna for Berlin, and a few hours later another message to the effect that she had eluded observation. This intelligence had the effect of causing me seriously to doubt whether the circus rider was after all the woman for my purpose. The extraordinary cleverness and ingenuity this young woman must have possessed to successfully elude the men I knew were shadowing her, proved the double A in her pedigree to be well deserved. But extraor-

dinary cleverness and ingenuity were not my need. Only the power to ingratiate, and the willingness, through fear or any other motive, to betray.

I wired for details of the woman's escape. The answer would eliminate my doubts one way or the other. It did. Mlle. Chang, conveying a rug and an overnight case, had boarded a corridor train at Vienna for Berlin, with two of my men at her heels. She had made herself comfortable with the rug and a book. My men stopped outside the door of her compartment but within earshot. They had not heard an unusual sound, yet when the train arrived at its first stop, Mlle. Chang, rug, book, overnight case, had vanished.

I was immensely delighted. My imagination pictured the faces of those two men. I wept tears of mirth; for by an odd coincidence I had performed precisely the same trick many years before, and thus instantly comprehended exactly what had occurred. I said to myself: "The circus rider is also an accomplished swimmer." Why not? Riding in a circus must create strong muscles—and courage. Essential characteristics of circus acrobatics. With courage, then, and strong muscles the Danube in August would scarcely deter a double A Freelance from the simplest possible method of escape. A warm evening, windows

down, the train crawling along the trestle—could anything be simpler for an athlete or an acrobat?

I looked forward with positive excitement to my first meeting with the Moon of Jade. Intuitively I reasoned that she would not come to me. Apparently her intuition was as keen as mine and had divined for her that something was amiss. I reasoned, then, she would go directly to St. Petersburg and look for Brother Paul there. In that event she would probably reach Warsaw about noon of the following day, several hours before I could possibly reach it. I might miss her at Vilna. Pskov was my best bet. Pskov, a charming old city for an assignation, with its old walls and its sluggish river, its ancient churches and monasteries. One might even secure a fish or two from the lake. Beside, I had friends there. M. Sudhov and M. Pushkin, the famous collectors of antiques and works of art. Pskov, then!

With two "shadows" and a swollen curiosity I boarded the train outside the town and went through the carriages. In the third I came upon her huddled in a corner by an open window with her face partly hidden by a yellow novel. Her eyes gave her away, however. Dark as midnight, brilliant as midday, alert, intelligent, cold, with latent fire, like a black cloud

charged with lightnings. As for her face it was more piquant than beautiful; small, oval, slightly olive in color, with brilliant cerise lips, a short nose and tiny ears. My men emptied the compartment of its protesting occupants leaving my quarry alone with me. Mlle. Chang's eyes steadily held mine while she appraised my strength and strove desperately to figure her exact position.

I took the seat directly opposite her, and smiling asked where she had learned to swim. She did not change countenance in the least. Nor did she reply. I said: "Pskov is a quaint old place with much of interest to see and remember. A dear friend of mine M. Sudhov, the famous numismatist, will entertain you with a view of his extraordinary collection of antiques, and give you sanctuary for the night, beside excellent food and wine. Also we, you and I, will have an opportunity to exchange confidences."

Still she was silent. I continued: "If you prefer to go on to St. Petersburg—" I shrugged expressively—"on a forged passport—" Her eyes flashed and in a voice of the greatest charm she told me that her passport was authentic.

"And your voice," I said gallantly. The train was stopping. Mlle. Chang bit her lip, frowned, shrugged,

said petulantly, "I do not care for antiquities. St. Petersburg is gay. There is time enough for confidences. We are alone, *mon vieux?*"

I coughed slightly. My two shadows stood in the doorway. Mlle. Chang laughed. My men retired. The train started. Mademoiselle and I conversed. We complimented each other. I her on her courage; she me on my intuition. I mentioned money—a large sum. It developed that she supposed me to be an agent of the Holy Synod. I did not undeceive her. She supposed my object to be the purchase of the documents Brother Paul had asserted were in his possession. I encouraged the error; at the same time sounding the lady as to her personal attachment to the monk. As I expected this brought negative results. Money then and confidence were my cards. I played them as skilfully as my experience and knowledge of women would allow. My safeguard was nothing more nor less invincible than the triple armour of my superior astuteness, longer experience and complete detachment from motives of personal gain.

Questioned as to her reasons for taking such a hazardous means for escape from my men at Vienna, and for her suspicions, she replied without evasion that she had suddenly became convinced that the com-

munications from Brother Paul were not genuine. She had no other explanation for this conviction save intuition. As for her leap from the moving train into the river it was only a logical result of her suspicions. If the communications were not genuine then inevitably she would be under surveillance. She was an expert diver and swimmer and had felt no fear. My admiration for her was enormously enhanced by this simple explanation; both for her physical courage and for her quick intelligence. My confidence was not lessened.

In St. Petersburg she lived quietly, attended Brother Paul's services regularly, refused to visit him but wrote flattering notes and under my guidance played upon his lecherous tendencies. She declared herself mad with love of him, but frightened by his popularity in the *haut monde*. She told him she had heard of the "Inner Temple," and was impatient to be initiated into its mysteries. In his replies he ignored her amatory suggestions, warned her to be cautious, and dwelt on the purpose of her mission—the documents compromising the Holy Synod. Finally, she offered to buy; but only on condition of her initiation into the "Inner Temple" first. He demanded a sum of money as earnest of her good faith. She sent double the amount

of his demand and promised more. The reply to this was a repetition of his wire of two months back: "Lavra St. George, Sergiyevo, October 24." Beneath this single typewritten line was the following, in his own hand: "Seek details of the Abbot in my name."

Nothing could have been more surprising. The venerable Abbot of the Monastary of St. George near Sergiyevo was famous throughout Russia for his holy living and vigorous denunciations of vice. At Sergiyevo was the great Lavra of Troitsko-Sergiyevskaya, the most sacred monastary in all Russia, a place of pilgrimage, honored by Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great; the Alma Mater of Philarete, who was no less a person than the father of the Romanoff dynasty!

Certum est quia impossibile est!

In Sergiyevo, some fifty odd miles from Moscow by motor, over vile roads Mlle. Chang and I enjoyed a day of sight-seeing, bought toys and souvenirs made by the monks, and as devout pilgrims ate our dinner in the refectory beneath the church of St. Sergius. After dark I drove Mlle. Chang to the lesser monastary of St. George, two miles to the north, and left her to interview the Abbot alone. Meanwhile I made a circuit of the crumbling walls, and with the aid of my flashlight took notes. Two hours went by. I sat in my

car and smoked, dozed, resorted to my pocket flask. Mlle. Chang appeared at last and demanded speed—an impossible thing on these roads. It was plain that she was considerably shaken by her interview. I figured from this that such details as she had got from the Abbot must be, at the least, sensational. She corroborated my imaginings, speaking in French and thus softening what in any other language would certainly have been impossible for her tongue.

There were to be four "initiations" on the 24th of October. All women. The climaxing feature of each to be a "bath of blood"—whether that of the neophytes or another's—whether animal or human, she had not learned. The ceremony was to take place at midnight in the great hall of the catacombs beneath the monastery. The double doors to this hall, the sole entrance, she was told, were of heavy Siberian pine, covered with iron plates. She had been conducted by the Abbot down several flights of stone stairways and into the huge room where she was instructed to make her vows before the altar and to kiss the "sacred" phallus of pure gold which protruded from its center panel. After this ceremony accompanied by certain prayers she was "baptized."

I asked for details. She shook her head and stead-

fastly refused to satisfy my curiosity, except to say with a shudder of repulsion that she would not endure the ordeal again for all the money in the Russian treasury. I dropped the subject and took up our discussion of the plans for the 24th of October.

It developed that Mlle. Chang's keen eyes had observed high up on the wall of the great room an aperture which she surmised to be a window, not open to the outer air but there for purposes of observation of the hall from a gallery or higher floor of the catacombs. My inspection of the outside walls of the monastery had disclosed what appeared to be a long-unused gate or door leading to an underground passage, but now almost completely overgrown with vines and shrubbery. I decided to investigate further, but in daylight.

Back at our hotel I found a wire from the Chief recalling me to St. Petersburg without delay. I obeyed the summons. Result: interview with the Chief then a race for the Berlin Express, caught by the narrowest of margins. Ten days of intensive work day and night—a hide and seek with death. Three days before the twenty-fourth of October; back in St. Petersburg. The evening of the twenty-fourth, Sergiyevo. Mlle. Chang at the station to meet me. Seventy-five picked

men under L.X. 11, who had already received their orders were at that moment surrounding the Lavra of St. George.

On the way out in my car I learned from Mlle. Chang that, taking her cue from my discovery of the door in the crumbling wall, she had, alone and at night, penetrated the catacombs of the monastery from the outside, and had discovered a passage leading to the observation window which she had noted from inside the hall the day of her interview with the Abbot. It would take, she said, about three-quarters of an hour for us to traverse the winding passages from the outside wall to the window. She suggested that my men be instructed to enter the monastery at midnight, cross the great entrance hall to a winding stairway at the back, descend to the iron doors at the bottom and blast them open with dynamite. I consulted my watch, it was exactly eleven o'clock. I agreed to the plan and gave my orders accordingly.

It is scarcely necessary to say that my admiration for this young woman's courage and perspicuity was accelerated by this intelligence. But it was as nothing in comparison with my emotions when at the end of another hour she had led and assisted me to negotiate

this same passage. To this day I marvel whenever I think of it.

To enter the aperture behind the sagging stone door in the old wall, it was necessary to stoop almost to hands and knees. Once through however, it was possible to proceed almost upright. The passage was not wide enough for us to go abreast, and in spite of my protests, Mlle. Chang insisted upon leading the way. It was black dark, and musty cobwebs obscured the orange beam from her pocket flash. Presently we came to a flight of steps hewn out of the rock on which the monastery was built. Down this we made our way cautiously. The steps were uneven in height and slanted as though worn by centuries of use. At the bottom of this stairway the passage widened out into a small square room with low arched ceiling. From the four corners, narrow passages led off into the darkness. With the aid of her flash, Mlle. Chang searched for a mark she had scratched on the wall near the passage we were to take. She had, she told me, followed each of the four for some distance. Three led to what was apparently a blind wall, but more probably a concealed door. The one she finally took led to another stairway winding, narrow, damp, the ceil-

ing sometimes not more than three or four feet above the steps.

Half crawling, half walking we slowly progressed downward stopping only when the ceiling gave us standing space. It was to me like walking through an endless black dream, a Slavic dream, tinged with horror and doubt. Once my hand touched something cold and soft. Something that squirmed under my palm and went flopping into the darkness. I jerked my hand away, shuddered with indescribable loathing, and swore disgustingly. Mlle. Chang laughed with disquieting amusement. Then I heard her stumble and fall. The flash-light clattered on the stone floor and went out. Instantly the darkness was like a thing felt—a live thing, which pressed and pushed against one's innate cowardice, and woke to quivering intensity of feeling those long-suppressed but still unconquered superstitions of the consciousness of evil! Mlle. Chang's rueful voice, half laughing, half tearful, brought me back to a semblance of myself, and in a second more I had my own flash out and alight.

She was standing about five feet away from me on a level floor wringing her hands and grimacing with disgust at the black slime which dripped from her

fingers. I produced all the handkerchiefs, I carried—four. She wiped her hands with one after the other, saying: "Ugh!" at every movement. At the same time she continued to smile at me with what seemed at the moment and under the circumstances, incredible enjoyment of our adventure. My face must have portrayed my feelings for she laughed merrily, and warned me that we had scarcely begun our journey. I forced a comment of admiration for her laughter, and looked about me. The damp walls had widened out into a rough-hewn room of perhaps ten feet square, the ceiling not more than an inch or two above the crown of my hat; and again four passages led from the four corners. Mlle. Chang cautioned me to walk warily on the slimy floor. I marveled at this young woman. Speechless with abhorrence of our surroundings I could only stare at her with an amazed wonder for the quality of courage she must have possessed—or been possessed by—which had enabled her to persist beyond the first ten steps into this foul darkness, alone! As I waited now for her to discover the mark she had made to indicate the proper passage to follow, I distinctly heard the slithery movements of creatures of what kind or nature I could not conceive. Rats?

Lizards? Snakes? What imaginable beast or reptile or vermin could choose such haunts of vileness? What creatures but those whose spirits were as vile?

Mlle. Chang beckoned me to follow her into one of the passages. Stooping we crept through a narrow opening which widened out on the other side into a cavernous chamber, natural no doubt, for after a few steps we crossed with infinite caution a bridge of stone blocks over a pool of stagnant water, whose sour odor was of the same quality as the touch of that squirming thing my hand had pressed—cold, slimy, bloodless; pregnant with fear! At the farther end of this bridge another narrow opening. Through this we squeezed, shrinking ourselves in the vain effort not to rub against the oozing sides, and stood upright in a wide, low-ceilinged chamber out of which a dozen or more passages led into the black darkness. The place reeked of death. Ages ago iron studs had been driven into the stone walls, and on these boards had been laid to hold the bodies of dead monks. Now the bones of these poor creatures lay scattered on the slimy floor, the iron spikes rusted through, and the boards long since rotted to pulpy ooze.

Mlle. Chang swung the beam of her flash around the chamber, and brought it to rest on a cracked mar-

ble slab which had fallen from its niche in the wall, and now lay propped against the side of one of the passages. On its rust and moisture stained surface an inscription had been intaglioed:

HORROR UBIQUE ANIMOS, SIMUL IPSA
SILENTIA TERRENT

I said: *"Mais certainement!"* and searched absently for a cigarette.

She asked, "What does it mean?" My Latin was at that moment a mixture of pigeon English and Kalmouk—Bashkir, but I ventured the translation "Everywhere horror terrifies the soul as well as silence."

She shrugged, muttering: "Amusing, isn't it. . . . ? This is the way." And we went on.

Another ten minutes, each minute an eternity of suspense, a nightmare of dread, lest I again touch some living horror! Then suddenly we found ourselves in a network of passages and corridors which twisted and turned this way and that. For some time my guide stood still listening intently. I followed her example. Again I heard distinctly the horrid sound of "things" slithering. Presently she said:

"The river, do you hear it?"

I listened again. Yes, far off the sound of running water, a gurgling noise like the death rattle in the throat of a tuberculosis victim. I felt, too, a cool draught. I said: "We are near an opening? I feel moving air." She agreed, laughed quietly and wished to know if, in the event that she deserted me, would I be competent to find my way out?

I said: "Of course!" And marveled at the infinite capacity for stupidity of which the human mind is sometimes capable! I had taken no account whatever of our path thus far. To get out I should be forced to go on. And in the event that I found no outlet that way—I pressed my hand against the cold steel of my automatic, my only certainty of a "way out." Then I added lightly: "You are incapable of treachery."

"To you, yes," she assured me coolly, and led me down a spiral stairway descending into a second labyrinth some twenty feet below. The floor and walls here were dry. A tangled network of passages ended in a large echo-haunted chamber; and with a suddenness which made my heart bound I was aware of human sounds, muffled but definite. The odor was reminiscent—burning candles! Incense! I was to experience a new amazement—the instantaneous metamorphosis of my whole spiritual being. It was as if

a child of five had, mysteriously bridging the intervening years, become a man of forty. Immediately I was capable of heroism, while at the same time incapable of fear. For the first moment since we had entered this terror-haunted labyrinth of foulness, the purpose of my errand came back to me. My blood began to boil, my courage rising with the temperature of my rage. If the foulness which lay ahead of me were less to be dreaded than that I had passed through, it was only because I was more familiar with it. Lechery, perversion, blood lust, death by violence—I had dealt with these for years.

Mlle. Chang, close behind me, whispered that at the end of one of the winding passages to our right was the window she had observed from the great hall. She looked at her wrist watch, it lacked a minute or two of midnight. We plunged into the passage and were soon at the window, an aperture cut in the rock about two feet wide by four high. It was covered by a mouldy piece of what had once been tapestry. The sounds and odors from below were now distinct. Words, sentences, cries, prayers, orders. The shuffling of many feet in a dance of some kind. I put out my hand to move the tapestry aside. I seemed paralyzed, my will at the mercy of my emotions—not fear—that

is to say not fear of the known. Not fear of what I had to do, or indeed or whom I might see, but fear of fear. I said: "Action!"

Mlle. Chang choked as a cloud of dust fell from the rotting cloth and spread about us in a black pall. I leaned forward. The sight was indeed amazing. An enormous vaulted chamber capable of accommodating four hundred persons at least. Innumerable wax candles and oil lamps burned before the ancient Byzantine ikons which formed a jeweled circle over a gray stone altar. From the high ceiling which was painted blue and orange to represent the sky and sun, hung suspended by heavy chains of wrought iron five chandeliers of silver. The center one of these chandeliers was in the shape of a coffin and was partly covered with a pall of cloth of gold. Directly beneath this, and reaching to within a few feet of it, stood an enormous phallus carved out of diorite with delicate green veins running down its sides. At the moment of our intrusion a procession was emerging from behind a curtain of silver brocade to the left of the stone altar; it was led by the gray-haired Abbot and consisted of monks in black robes, each bearing aloft a holy ikon or a sacred banner. They circled the phallus twice, while unseen choirs chanted what sounded like a

psalm. Blue clouds of incense rose in the still air from the rhythmically swung censers.

Groups of men and women sat on the floor, munching black rye biscuits in profanation of the Holy Sacrament. If I should list the names of those I recognized it would read like a paradoxical "Who's Who," made up of the highest and the lowest—leaders of society, government, the army, and proprietors, both male and female, of brothels and houses of prostitution—the nobility and the underworld.

To say that I was surprised would not be true. Surprised—no; but shocked, ashamed, angry to the point of a murderous rage! I longed for the first sound of my men at work on the great double doors at the far end of the room, and prepared for my leap of ten feet or thereabouts to the floor below me. Meanwhile we watched, ourselves unseen, the ancient ritual of the Phoenicians, travested, profaned, gradually turned into a neurotic orgy. Drugs were being freely used—hashish, ergotine, ether, alcohol, the juice of the Kalmouk moon beetles, champagne, vodka, liqueurs, served by priests from black and white tables which were lighted by wax tapers and multi-colored votive lamps. On the Daghestan rugs scattered about the floor of the huge place lay the twisting, writhing bodies of nude

and half-nude men and women. There were men masquerading as women, and women as men. A bell tinkled softly. The unmistakable rasping voice of a famous Caucasian General snapped like a pistol shot:

"Attention, salopard!"

There was a sudden silence, and Brother Paul, wearing the gorgeous costume of an Assyrian High Priest stepped out from behind the silver curtain, leading a young woman by the hand—the first of the neophytes, probably.

The scene which followed was one of indescribable horror. I watched, fascinated, revolted, scarcely realizing that this barbaric orgy was actually taking place before my eyes. I can not even hint at its details—except this: the "bath of blood," which Mlle. Chang had been told was to be the climaxing feature of each initiation, was not a mere phrase invented to excite the perverse sensationalism in the minds of Brother Paul's congregations, but a reality—an actual thing! A thing to which no words of mine can so graphically attest as the simple fact that as I stood there frozen with horror I felt a sudden weight against my shoulder. Mlle. Chang had fainted.

The next moment a terrific crash told me that my men had exploded a charge of dynamite against the

huge iron doors. As I whirled about, the tortured rocks spouted fountains of debris, mud and smoke. Women screamed, men shouted and cursed. The din was colossal! I shook off my half-conscious companion, and sliding out of the window dropped to the floor, striking two persons, men or women—I don't know —and fell headlong on my face. The place was pandemonium. The surprise had apparently knocked their wits awry. No one seemed able to make an intelligent move. They ran in all directions, shrieking, calling on God, cursing blasphemously. Brother Paul stood like a man turned to stone, his arms upraised as if to ward off the impending doom. I was up and half way across the big room before he had gathered his wits enough to comprehend what had occurred. I made straight for him. He saw me coming, and with a shout of rage sprang to meet me. I reached for my automatic, but a second and third explosion threw me sidewise into a melee of screaming women. My feet were dragged from under me and I went down with a crash. The floor heaved, blood trickled into my eyes, and before I could gain my feet Brother Paul was on top of me, howling vile epithets and threats of frightful tortures.

He was a heavy man, as hard as granite and with

muscles of tempered steel. I was in a vise, my breath cut off by his weight and one arm about my neck. My eyes caught the gleam of steel as he drew a Cossack hunting knife from under his robe. With a sudden wrench which almost tore my spine in two, I twisted myself to one side, and before he could recover his hold I had his knife arm behind him and was on the point of forcing it up against the back of his neck, when I began to realize that my strength was failing. Then I used a trick that twice already in my career had saved my life. Throwing all my weight against his right side I bent him backward and, as at the same time he threw his head forward in the struggle, with all the strength I had left crashed my skull against his face. The cheek bones cracked and gave way, and with a shudder of his whole body Brother Paul fell limply sidewise and rolled over, his legs and arms flexing grotesquely. Thick blood bubbled from between his lips and the hollow of his left eye socket, from which the eye ball hung down and rolled about his face as the twitching muscles threw his head this way and that. I rose painfully and drawing my automatic shot him through the forehead.

The rest doesn't bear telling. Up till now the affair had been an adventure—in the line of duty to be sure

—still, an adventure; an adventure made infinitely more interesting to me because of the revelation of courage, and the true comradely spirit with which Mlle. Chang had invested it. But from the death of Brother Paul the affair took on a different color. Ruthless, sordid, soul-degrading. It is sufficient to say that those of the company whose disappearance, because of rank or position, would have caused scandal, were allowed to go. The rest—about one hundred and twenty in all—were herded into a corner of the big room and shattered into eternity with a charge of dynamite.

Hidden in a secret cupboard in the back of the altar we found the compromising documents, which though never the object of my assignment had been the means of my securing the assistance of Mlle. Chang, without whom I venture to say I should not have succeeded. However, with these incriminating papers in our possession the Service had now the means of preventing to some extent at least the treasonable activities of the Holy Synod.

CASE "E"—"180"—7234
File D 13 at. c.p.r.—V—04

Prussian "Honor"

From a letter of D. 13
To Major General Bradwell-White

IT WAS MY INVARIABLE HABIT TO TAKE A REST OF SOME kind—short or long as the circumstances might warrant—upon the conclusion of each of my assignments; a habit which became increasingly rigid with the passing years, but increasingly difficult to follow as the already overworked Service became more and more involved with the multiplication of forces which strove directly and indirectly toward the disintegration of the Empire. Everything increased except the personnel of the Service!

As one could not be in two places at one time, so one could not concentrate upon two, three, four—any number of vitally important matters, each one of which was task enough for a dozen men of force and ability. Had there been two or three hundred of us—men like myself, and the Chief, and the four or five others who made up the inner circle of the White Branch; men who were selfless in their love for Russia and their devotion to His Majesty—had there been a single one of *us* who possessed the mysterious, the wholly inex-

plicable influence at court and with the Tzar personally that the ex-horse thief Rasputin did, the history of Russian civilization would obviously be quite other than at this moment.

Is there a God? Or only gods? or only atoms? Answer——

Never had I felt the imperative need of rest more keenly than when, after disposing of Brother Paul and his congregation of Lesbians and Sadists, I reached St. Petersburg—to find the Chief absent, but instructions left behind for me to take over the Command of the White Branch until further orders!

I was too tired, too listless to put my disappointment into words. After receiving the reports of my subordinates, I went home and shut myself in my beloved "lab," not to work, but to snatch every instant of rest—or restfulness, rather—that the quiet of that atmosphere would produce for me. Nowhere else, not even in my country house, could I rest with the same complete relaxation of mind as well as of body. The country calls one out of doors. The city bids one stop inside, and when one is tired, no city more so than St. Petersburg—St. Petersburg of the *izvoschiks* and *drogaly* filling the streets with a mixture of early morning noises, harsh noises, Tartar profanity, Finnish

mumblings, an occasional screech from a *kvas* vender, and mingling with it all the steady patter of women selling their unsavory meat pies. I was not only tired but utterly discouraged. Life seemed to have transformed itself into a package of fine needles which were using me for a cushion, each needle touching some sensitive nerve. I smoked and thumbed listlessly "The Yama," by Kouprin, sipped a glass of cold tea and tried to deceive myself into a rosier mood.

The telephone receiver was off the hook, the bells stuffed with cotton as an extra precaution, the code lamps disconnected from the main circuit, and the little private door bore a coded and unfriendly message for the undercover men—pests and nuisances when one wished for quiet! Then, to my intense annoyance, hurrying footsteps, a trifle squashy from oversized galoshes affected by most of the undercover men, sounded through the long corridor leading to my "lab." After a pause, evidently while he read the unfriendly message on my door, someone knocked using the prearranged signal—"rat-tat" stop, then a quick succession of steady blows, one, two, three, four, five, six. I was too lazy to swear. I merely shrugged and muttered to myself: "Operator S-66 of the Foreign Branch, probably, to vent his private grudge against a

new bunch of foreign agents working on a 'wait' case of small importance." Wearily, I pressed a concealed button on the desk, connected the telephone, pressed the button once more, and the door opened without the slightest sound.

S-66 of the Foreign Branch entered; tall, lean, gray haired, with a humorous twinkle in his beery eyes. He wore a long black coat with a cheap astrakhan collar which made him look like a bank clerk or a provincial relative of Chekov fame. He plunked himself into a chair with a plebeian indifference to its Cordovan leather; chewed on a dead cigar, cleared his throat and said nothing. We smoked. A *Régie* and a cigar of the slums fraternized. Five minutes passed, then I stretched an expectant hand and felt the slippery surface of a Service envelope. S-66 rose. There was no need to press the button again, my visitor used another door, a door known only to the most trusted agents living abroad. S-66 was one of these. He had not spoken; a significant indication in his case that he was on a desperate trail.

I opened the envelope and found a catalogue of commercially printed paper ikons, dealt in by a well-known firm in Moscow. The needles stopped pricking and almost immediately my curiosity was aroused to

its working pitch. A thorough examination of the gaudily illustrated pages led to the discovery on page 16 of an Ikon of The Trinity, underscored several times with red ink. Underneath was a comment by S-66, thus; "Found in the Berlin studio of Rutak Indra, alias Franz Schmaltz, alias Karl Rittenberg, portrait painter."

Tiens! The last time I had had the pleasure of seeing M. Indra was when I escorted him over the frontier for an offence against the Orthodox Church. Sacrilege; that is to say, childish if atheistic language addressed to a group of moujiks standing bareheaded before the Cathedral of St. Isaacs.

Discovering some bluish dots on the flap of the catalogue, I brought out my array of chemical reagents, glass tubes, flat paper knives and the old reliable mixture of protargol. Nothing happened except that the dots blurred and took on a purplish color. I spent at least four hours testing the pages with chemicals and even went so far as to take some special photographs, of the Ikon of The Trinity on page 16. The catalogue had been recently published, a telephone call to the printing house established that fact.

More time passed. My "lab" smelt now like a Jewish chemist shop after a pogrom, and to heighten

the illusion there were many smashed retorts and a fine coating of glass on the tiled floor. Fresh air was plainly indicated. I yawned, put on a coat and opened the door used by the resident agents.

Crash! S-66 again! He lurched in, coughing and groaning, spattering blood and froth over the floor, tried to speak, said: "ikon," clutched at his throat and fell headlong. An odor of brandy and a sweetish smell of some drug permeated the room, nearly overpowering all the other odors. I unhooked the telephone receiver and called Headquarters. A familiar voice said curtly "The very devil to pay!" paused and said "Coming!" Then there was the angry snap at the other end of the line.

I examined the body of S-66. He was dead and the eyes already glazing. There was a gash in his scalp —the blood still wet—his overcoat was plastered with bits of undigested food. Evidently the man had tried in vain to throw off the poison. Failing he gamely stuck to his duty. A daredevil, murdered by some master spy; Austrian, German, French, British, Japanese, Italian . . . ?

"Rat-tat, pause tat"—the Chief. I thanked the God I doubted. The Chief came in, a flurry of twitching nerves, a *Régie,* gray spats, a Malacca cane, and the

Courtesy of Count O. —— U. S. S. R.

Caricature of "The Chief," by D. 13

explosive *"Deus Optimus Maximus!"* I grinned sourly, pointed at the body, and with an exaggerated bow offered him a chair. The Chief's first move was the sign of the Cross, then slowly and meticulously he unfolded a tale of woe. An Ikon of The Trinity of Saroff had been stolen from the "Sisterhood of the Virgin," of which Grand Duchess Elizabeth was an inmate. I cut short the account, and switched on the dictaphone so as to have an official record of the conversation. The Chief spoke again. In short, clipped words he gave the details of the theft of the ikon as reported to him by General O. of the City Police and by the Minister of the Interior S.

It seemed that the ikon of The Trinity measuring twelve by eighteen inches and donated by Grand Duchess Elizabeth of the Sisterhood, had vanished into space. The Grand Duchess was frantic, and a frantic sister of the Tzarina meant something. Inheriting the Hesse temper, she had already made enough trouble to stir the Political Police out of its usual *laisser-aller,* which of course brought the case to its proper pigeonhole, the White Branch, of the Service.

The sweetish odor seemed to fill the "lab" and I dragged the body into the adjoining dissecting room. Suddenly I remembered something long forgotten. I touched the lips of S-66 with cotton, pressed it hard,

opened the mouth with difficulty, using a pair of surgical forceps, inserted more cotton and made a dash for the nearest chemical retort. Blue flames cracked and sizzled, the mixture slowly tinged the cotton to a greenish blue. The Chief looked on. Slowly the cotton turned into a reddish mass, then blackened and retained its sinister color. We nodded simultaneously. "Killed by a German Spy," the retort said that much. The particular poison was an invention of one Dr. Von Moudra, a chemist attached to the German Secret Service. It was a slow poison and calculated to kill after strenuous exercise. No antidote would save the victim. Von Mudra was a genius of sorts.

The Chief closed his hands over the dial of the code lamps, worked them long and earnestly, the miniature buzz sounding like a swarm of bees in the dead silence of the room. The blue lamp winked twice, the Chief focused his eyes on the yellow and red ones, waiting for an important message from Headquarters. It came in short dynamic flashes as if the operator had put the spirit of the Service into a mass of interconnecting wires.

"Rutak Indra No. 178-A. S. left Berlin August Second, presumably for Russia. Indra atheist. Special operator German Secret Service."

The message came to an end.

The Chief said "How does he fit in?"

I shook my head, reached for the telephone, called the German Embassy and asked for a particular friend of mine, a charming young woman earning her wages as a typist, extra money as an agent of the Personal Court Branch, and "pin money" as mistress of the First Secretary of the Embassy.

Identifying myself by a "love" password, I said: "Rutak Indra." She answered "Fertilizing the daisies on an unmarked grave. Retribution for his first puppy clumsiness as a spy." I thanked my blonde friend and rang off. To the Chief I said:

"Our painter friend, Rutak Indra, doesn't fit in. He is dead."

The Chief exploded profanely. Some of our resident agents in Germany were earning their money by cooked-up and stale lies, picked up in some "spy cafés," created as a blind against snooping foreign agents. The report re: 178 A. S. (Rutak Indra) must have emanated from one of these. That is if the man Indra were in fact dead. I disinterred the catalogue from a jumble of broken retorts, remains of a vivisected rabbit, a box of marrons glacés, some charred lace and the ever-present Bacardi. Zut! I studied with minute care the ikons of different saints, male, female

and of mixed sex, the somewhat etherealized angels with outspread wings. Then I came to the reproduction of the Ikon of The Trinity.

I counted the underscoring lines, each succeeding line somewhat shorter than its predecessor. The last one hovered tremblingly over the Russian letter "G," and even touched it. The Chief snatched the catalogue from my hands, stuffed it into his pocket and forced me down stairs to a waiting car.

I noticed a limousine turning the corner and pointing its sloping nose to the camouflaged entrance to my "lab." It was the funeral cortège of S-66, who would get a silent burial with no holy words, only muttered curses of his colleagues . . . the burial of a Secret Service man.

On our way to Headquarters I harassed the nearly apoplectic Chief on the questionable information received from our resident agents abroad. He shrugged his shoulders and muttered *"Deus Optimus Maximus!"* in a surly voice, adding a soothing comment to the effect that one D-13 was getting too hasty in believing female information not assured by a tender liaison—"A little love never spoiled the veracity of a report, not in the case of handsome D-13!"

I scratched my palm viciously. Fraulein Martha was

positive in giving her information, and with convincing details of Indra's death. Yet S-66 had never failed during the years of his long service, never! Here was mystery—or treachery. The latter, of course, since the first is only another name for ignorance of the facts.

Our car stopped in a dingy street crowded with civilians, men who stood or walked, jerking a mouth-corner characteristically, the pick of the Service ranks, waiting for orders. We made a dash for the underground passage connecting the street with Headquarters, cursed the antiquated elevator, locked ourselves in the Chief's library and drank Bacardi sparingly, to stimulate our thinking caps.

I pounced on the report from the City Police, a lengthy document covering the theft of the Ikon of The Trinity, the property of the "Sisterhood of the Virgin." It was a mere repetition of what I had already heard from the Chief. Nothing to give the slightest lead to further investigations by the White Branch. I looked to the Chief to produce an excuse for dragging me into this vague, and so far as I could vision, unimportant affair. The theft of an ikon—who cares?

He nodded comprehendingly and pushed a photographic copy of a memorandum—written in German—toward me. I read: "Second of August, 1914." He

asked if I recognized the hand. It seemed familiar, but I shook my head.

"Rasputin," he barked; then told me where the memorandum had been found—among the private papers of Grand Duchess Elizabeth which had been investigated while the lady was being interrogated about the stolen ikon. I waited. He handed me a photograph of a leaf torn from a notebook. The same words, in code: "Second of August, 1914"—the code was that of the war office and the handwriting that of the War Minister.

I glanced at the desk calendar. The date was August 6 (*Spas Dien*), 1913. The day on which honey and apples are eaten.

I said: "The ikon?" The Chief shrugged expressively; explained that Grand Duchess Elizabeth's anxiety over the theft of the ikon was more like anguish, and altogether too extreme to be attributable to anything short of real disaster. Under test the ink on the memorandum in Rasputin's hand had proved to be not more than a few weeks—probably days—old. Approximately the same age as that in the War Minister's notebook.

I began to see light—not as to the meaning of the date, but only that this date, whatever it might signify,

was not originally intended for Grand Duchess Elizabeth's knowledge, since it was well known that she was in almost daily correspondence with one or another member of her family in Germany as well as in constant touch with the German Embassy in St. Petersburg.

The Chief smiled at my dawning illumination, as he handed me the third and last exhibit. A photostatic copy of a letter covering seven pages. It was in German script, and in a handwriting neither of us had ever before seen. The letter had been intercepted and photographed somewhere en route, and then allowed to proceed to its destination. The envelope was addressed to "Erich von Henesch," and the address was that of the studio of Rutak Indra in Berlin.

The letter began conventionally and described in rather formal terms a drive into the country and a boat excursion on the Neva. It was signed: "Gretchen." Every fourth to ninth word was mispelled—only to the extent of a single letter, however—and the correct letter written over the incorrect one. A crude code indeed, indicative of the amateur. Without the slightest difficulty I read the message conveyed by the incorrect letters in the mispelled words simply by jotting down the letters, but making no attempt to con-

struct words till I had all the letters in order. Then I drew lines, thus: the/date/has/been/decided—and got the following:

"The date has been decided without Nicholas (') Alix ('s) knowledge (.) only r knows (.) he makes impossible condition (.) will give price if no other way (.) let indra make portraits (.) prints must be made in Berlin (.) inscription on back of ikon will give date (.) count letters after number (as) months (.) lines (as) days (of month).

"There was no signature. The punctuation and words in brackets I supplied for myself afterward merely to clarify the sentences.

The Chief with a twinkle of satisfaction in his gray eyes now, pointed out a word which had been erased and another substituted. The erased word was illegible, and the substituted word, *"fruhling"* had no misspelling. I had not therefore noticed it as in any way significant. My attention called to it, however, I saw at once that it was in a different hand from the rest of the letter. The Chief produced a photostatic copy of a holograph letter in German written by Grand Duchess Elizabeth to the Tzarina, in which the same word occurred. The handwriting was identical with that of the substituted word, *"fruhling."* From this it

became evident that the letter though written in another hand was in fact written at the instance of the Grand Duchess—probably dictated by her. I examined the individual letters imposed over the wrong ones in the misspelled words. They were in the Grand Duchess's hand!

The Chief and I discussed the matter at length, concluding as follows:

(1) Clearly, Grand Duchess Elizabeth was in secret correspondence with Germany. If secret, then forbidden. (2) Clearly, Rutak Indra was not fertilizing the daisies on his own grave. He was still alive, still engaged in secret service work. (3) Clearly Rasputin was the "r" of the intercepted letter, and had communicated the information "August second, 1914" to Grand Duchess Elizabeth.

That much was crystal clear, but the theft of the ikon and the Grand Duchess's exaggerated concern was still to be explained. Add the dramatic death of Op. S-66 and the circumstantial lie of my young typist friend in the German Embassy, and you will see that we had a bit of unraveling ahead of us.

The Chief was called to the telephone. I sat at the desk and began to make notes—details of the theft of the ikon.

The picture in its gold and silver frame had been given to the Sisterhood by the Tzarina at the time that Grand Duchess Elizabeth had taken up her residence in the convent. Since that time it had been kept constantly under the surveillance of two of the sisters, as a protection against possible desecration by women who failed to receive miraculous protection against sterility. On the night of the theft, the two sisters designated for the third four-hour night watch, that is, midnight to 4 A.M., had both fallen ill simultaneously —and had retired to their own rooms without notifying anyone. The ikon was alone for the first time in many years. The door of the Chapel was not locked. The names of the two sisters were Baroness Von Dudhoff and Matilda Von Kragenau—both Germans, and both widows of prominent statesmen.

As I wrote the last word the Chief crashed the telephone receiver on its hook and swore viciously. I looked at him. He said: "Poison!"

I thought of the dead S-66. The Chief divined my mistake. He said:

"His Majesty!"

"Poisoned?" I sprang to my feet.

The Chief motioned me to be seated.

"An attempt. Not successful, thank God! His

Majesty has not been apprised. Nor has the Tzarina."

I waited. He continued: "Gelsemine was found in the honey which was to be served with apples to His Majesty."

"Who found it?" I gasped.

"L. G., one of Baron Fredericks' aides. My information comes from the Baron himself.

I swept the data I had been studying into a drawer and said: "Damn the ikon. I shall take this on!"

The Chief frowned and shook his head. We argued. I was finally convinced that the two affairs would better be linked in our efforts, since it was more than probable they were one and the same as to source and intended result. That is to say, it was a ten to one shot that the theft of the ikon and the attempt on His Majesty's life were products of the same brain. If so, the chances were enormously in favor of the theory that both emanated directly from Prussia!

The political situation in Russia at the moment was extraordinarily involved. The Tzar's death would have clarified it in some directions and in others tangled it hopelessly. A regency under Grand Duke Cyril was the most likely result to be feared, accompanied as it inevitably would be by civil strife, if not complete revolution. Prussia's opportunity in any case!

We sifted the possibilities and probabilities; gradually narrowing them down till possibilities seemed confined to not more than three and probabilities to one. The Chief took up the Palace end of the matter, and I the Wilhelmstrasse.

Continually comparing notes our hypothetical conclusions were soon enough transformed into certainties. Our men, watching a house on the left bank of the Neva—a house designated in our files by the letters "Z" and "I"—which meant "Spy net, not to be raided on any account"—reported a certain Pavel Gliebov, proprietor of a café on the outskirts of the City, as having visited this place, alone, stopping inside only a few minutes and emerging in company with two men and a woman—(none of the three recognized). They had all gone directly to Gliebov's café. Gliebov, approached by L.3.x005. and spoken to in German, had replied in Russian, but with a strong German intonation.

I ordered Herr "Gliebov" (certainly an alias)—kept under strict surveillance and the identity of the other two men and the woman immediately discovered. Then I went back to my speculations, reaching out mentally for a clue, a thread, no matter how slender. The catalogue of printed paper ikons lay directly under the glare of a specially brilliant reading light on the

Chief's desk, its glossy pages a mystery, its polychromed ikons an abomination to the eyes. Why, I asked myself, had S-66 brought it to me. I went over to the desk, sat down and began to study the reproductions. Page 16 held my attention. The Ikon of The Trinity of Saroff underscored in red ink was, of course, a reproduction of the original which had been stolen from the "Sisterhood of the Virgin." That explained S-66's reason for bringing the catalogue to me. Yet, somehow, I was not satisfied with this explanation. I made my mind a blank and waited for inspiration—my eyes resting half hypnotized on the darting gold fish in their malachite prison. They chased one another, streaks of golden lightning among the green aquarium plants—dash—stop—dash stop—dash—stop. It was amusingly reminiscent of code flashes—merely an association of ideas, of course. "Ah!" The inspiration I awaited popped into my open mind! I found a bottle of olive oil in a drawer of the desk and with a camel hair brush oiled the varying lines which underscored the Ikon of The Trinity on page 16 of the catalogue, touching off the oily surface with a solution of organic salts which I kept handy in a waistcoat pocket. Dots and dashes of the Morse code appeared between the red lines, somewhat blurred but still quite legible. I whistled

triumphantly. The Chief at the telephone turned his face my way. I said: "Morse code!" and read aloud: "A and G in our pay—connect with B. 003 Moscow F. 651 Warsaw. L. 772 Brody."

The signature made out with difficulty was "Karl."

The Chief hung up the telephone receiver and exclaimed: "von Schpecht of the Nachrichten Bureau."

I said: "The brains of the service—with one colossal fault."

The Chief smiled. "A Prussian!"

I shrugged. "And like all Prussians invariably overshoots the mark."

The Chief's mouth twisted to one side. "Do not let us make the mistake of under-rating him."

I agreed, at the same time promising to prove my point.

We studied the message in the catalogue: "A and G in our pay." G? I spelled: "Gliebov"—the Chief said: "Have him in."

I gave the necessary order. We puzzled for some time over the "A." There were of course at least a hundred suspects to which it might apply. We came to no decision but took up the rest of the message: "Connect with B. 003 Moscow F. 651 Warsaw. L. 772 Brody." These were obviously German agents. We

sent off the necessary telegrams to our men in those cities, agreeing to confine ourselves to St. Petersburg for the time being.

The ceiling light glowed, showing that someone was on the stairs. I pushed the button which opened the visitor's door. Op. C-22 entered, dragging with him a bullet-headed individual with a half-torn beard and a very bloody and much bruised jaw. The fellow was manacled; his hands behind him. C-22 handed a card to the Chief, who read: "Pavel Gliebov, café proprietor. Seen leaving "Z" and "I" with two men and a woman. Traced to Gliebov's café. The men and the woman not in café or any part of building when place raided."

The Chief ordered the prisoner's wrists released and dismissed C-22 with a curt order to find the two men and the woman.

M. Pavel Gliebov was as Prussian as a dachshund. He would be obstinate—as was also evidenced by his torn beard and bloody jaw. However, there are ways and means of making a Prussian talk. One has only to offer him an opportunity to boast. Another and sometimes equally effective way is contempt. We kept this one standing without an attempt to question him. I worked out the code messages continually flashing

from the colored lamps in the alcove behind the prisoner's back, while the Chief studied the "pedigree" files, till he found what he sought.

Almost an hour had passed before anyone spoke. Then the Chief turned on the Prussian, snapped two words: "Unter officier?"

The fellow clicked his heels and straightened proudly. "Rittmeister!" he said, and twisted his Kaiser mustache upward with his right forefinger and thumb.

The Chief said: "Rittmeister Franz von der Gucht. Nachrichten number, 1717 N.B.R. Who is the A?"—indicating with the point of his pencil the "A" on page 16 of the catalogue.

Rittmeister von der Gucht shrugged, put his head on one side, was about to deny any knowledge, then suddenly decided to boast. He assumed a soldierly attitude, and said in German: "She is known to us as 'Anna the Mattress.' But you are too late. The ikon is already in Berlin!"

The Chief inspected his highly polished nails and said oracularly: "At the studio of M. Rutak Indra. *Da?*"

Herr von der Gucht changed color, but made no reply. The Chief touched a button, and when a guard appeared made a sign with his left hand, indicating

that the prisoner was to receive every consideration except release.

As the door closed after the guard and Von der Gucht, a bomb was exploded in our very faces—not literally, but a mental bomb. Still watching the code lamps while the Chief talked with our Prussian, and jotting down the messages as they came in, minutes apart, all of a sudden I sprang to my feet with an exclamation, half incredulity, half horror. The Chief leaned over what I had written and read aloud, slowly:

"Underground passage from Gliebov's café to river cabin one hundred yards east . . . passage explored . . . two men and woman escaped in boat . . . one witness. Witness deposes boat landed right bank . . . boat discovered. Searched. No evidence . . . four witnesses saw two men and woman leave boat . . . witnesses taken along route indicated as taken by party. Three witnesses identify single man entering cab . . . cab followed . . . man in cab Volkoff . . . woman and other man lost."

The Chief's words came whistling through his teeth —"Volkoff, His Majesty's valet!"

The next marked space of time—five—ten—twenty minutes—was an ordered panic. The Chief sprang to the telephone, I for the stairs. I reached the Palace in

a commandeered car—no time to order one out of the garage—and dashed up to Baron Fredericks' offices three steps at a jump. He was surrounded by secret service men of all classes, ages, and orders of service. At the moment of my abrupt entrance he was on the point of hanging up a telephone receiver. His face was grayish green. He barked an order: "His Majesty! Report!" Four men left the room. Baron Fredericks spoke again: "Volkoff! Report!"

The room emptied itself save for two Palace guards, who stood inside the door. I leaned down to the Baron's ear and said: "You and I will go to His Majesty. He must be told."

He nodded slowly, a look of pain in his eyes. We waited in silence for the report as to His Majesty's whereabouts. It was not long in coming. He was in the chapel adjoining the private apartments. We decided, Baron Fredericks and I, that it was best not to mention the gelsemine in the honey intended for His Majesty, unless it became imperative to do so; but only to place before him the circumstances of the theft of the ikon and the discovery of Volkoff's presence in a secret flight from the café of von der Gucht.

The Tzar, who waived all etiquette when the Service was concerned, admitted us to his presence im-

mediately. I outlined the situation briefly. He utterly refused to credit a word against Volkoff. The man had been with him, a faithful and loving servant, for many years; his loyalty and affection were complete and without flaw or question. His Majesty insisted that he would as soon question the loyalty of either of us.

I bowed, stepped back. Baron Fredericks took my place. He described the poisoned honey, the circumstances of its discovery and the nature of the poison. His Majesty, who feared death as little as any of us, was shocked beyond description. He was a confirmed sentimentalist. Loyalty to his person came first in his estimation of human virtues, and would—indeed did, in a hundred cases—excuse treason to the Empire. On the other hand, and logically enough to be sure, treason to his person was the unforgivable sin. It was his creed, his religion; and to give him his due, he lived up to it with scrupulous exactitude. He was aghast now at Baron Fredericks' story, but made no pretence of doubting it. Volkoff was ours. The Tzar required only that we make certain beyond the shadow of a doubt that Volkoff was involved in the poison plot "before we touched a hair of his head." His Majesty would himself judge the evidence.

Which was merely another way of saying that if the valet was concerned only in a plot to betray the Empire he would be forgiven!

Our honor was pledged—not the Service's, but our own, Baron Fredericks' and mine individually. We were left without a loophole. We returned to Baron Fredericks' offices. Volkoff was brought down. He was told that he, with several others, of the Palace personnel, had been exposed to a contagious disease, and would of necessity be quarantined. If he suspected anything he was an excellent actor. He betrayed nothing but concern for Their Majesties, and consented without protest to be confined to his quarters—under lock and key. He took the drug administered by Dr. Korovin, who explained that it was a test which would not only determine whether or not Volkoff had contracted the disease, but in the event that he had not, would shorten his period of quarantine by half. It was in fact, a sedative, powerful enough to make him helpless to escape even if the opportunity presented itself, a contingency far from likely under the dramatic circumstances which obtained at the moment—and always for that matter—but in this instance peculiarly enhanced by a combination of elements coincidental with far reaching potentialities.

Volkoff under lock and key, guarded, drugged, we enjoyed a momentary respite. Nevertheless our anxiety was but relieved, not cured. Not one of us, the Chief, Baron Fredericks or myself, could credit the notion of the valet's guilt. The man, though of humble origin, was intelligent, and for many years had proved his loyalty and affection for the Royal Family. We had no choice but to assume his guilt, however, since the circumstances of his visit to the café of von der Gucht were obviously not innocent.

Baron Fredericks and I discussed the matter at length. The Secret Service net was spread to its utmost limits. The Chief arrived. He gave me a memorandum of the arrest of a slum rat known to the police as the "Weasel." This man was a character—that is, a stool pigeon, a gigolo, card sharp, forger and, not least, a real leader in the underworld of Kieff. He had crossed the path of the service once, some two or three years before, but only indirectly, and I had managed to save him from a rather messy death at the hands of the City Police.

I raced back to Headquarters and ordered the Weasel brought in. When he saw me he almost collapsed with sudden relief from terror. His squinting, narrow eyes opened wide, his shoulders sagged limply, his

hands, continually twitching, opened and closed spasmodically, and the swollen bluish under lip trembled pathetically. He needed a shave, a bath, food, sleep—also he needed cocaine, badly. I dismissed the guard who had brought him in. Said: "Sit down." Then filling a hollow quill with the white powder, moistened the end, put in some more powder and handed it to the suffering creature. He snuffed in the drug hungrily, then after a moment of complete immobility, while he gave himself to the full appreciation of his relief, he began searching his pockets, finally fishing out a small and much battered military hair brush. He held it out to me with a knowing wink, and said through the corner of his mouth: "Hollow." I took the brush, tapped its back with a fingernail, pulled at the bristles, snapping the brush in two. Inside was a metal disc, slightly tarnished; on one side the number 1863 and on the reverse N. B. R. (Nachrichten Bureau, Russian Service) and a thin sheet of paper covered on both sides with figures and letters.

I said: "You?"

The Weasel shook his head, and in picturesque but quite unrepeatable language outlined the circumstances which had placed the brush in his possession. He had, he said, not without a certain pride, been wit-

ness to a murder that morning. It had taken place, he insisted, in von der Gucht's café. He, the Weasel, was seeking cocaine of which he was much in need, his usual source of supply having failed for some reason. He had met a woman, known to him as the "Canary," because of her very yellow hair. His description of the woman tallied perfectly with that of a female operator in the service of the Political Police, and well known to me. The Weasel was convinced that it was she who had caused his arrest, and digressed from his story of the murder to warn me against women in general and blonds in particular. I brought him back to the subject with a sharp order, and got the rest of his story as follows:

The Weasel was sitting just inside the door of the café waiting for the Canary, who was to bring him cocaine. Presently she entered with two men whom he now described, and whom I recognized at once as Volkoff and the German, Rutak Indra. The man whom I believed to be Volkoff had disappeared. The other, Indra (?) and the Canary sat at a table in the corner where they were soon joined by the café proprietor. The Weasel was on the point of approaching the trio, with the purpose of attracting the woman's attention, when a man (S-66 from his description) entered, and covering Indra (?) with his revolver

ordered him to submit to arrest. The Weasel, deciding that he was perhaps *de trop,* slid out through the door, and dodging behind a dust bin, watched and listened. Presently S-66 was brought out by Indra (?) and von der Gucht, put into a waiting motor car, the two men getting in also, and the car drove off. The Weasel, anxious to the last degree to obtain the drug for which he had come, went back into the café in search of the woman. The place was empty. But on the floor was the military hair brush. He picked it up, and suspecting that it was hollow, pried it open. The disc and the sheet of paper fell out. He put them back, closed the brush, dropped it into his pocket and left the place. Three hours later while still seeking cocaine he was arrested by the city police.

I gave him some money, a supply of cocaine, and dismissed him, not, however, till I had made an appointment to meet him that evening at a certain "tea house" where tea was taboo and a kettle nothing short of blasphemy. I desired, above the price of rubies, an interview with the Canary.

When the Weasel had gone I sent a code telegram to our resident agent in Berlin.

"A. H. F. C. 14.2.18" which, decoded, reads:

"1 8 6 3 N. B. R."

Then I sat down to decode the sheet of paper found

in the hair brush. After two good hours of wasted effort I was interrupted by the reply to my Berlin telegram.

"No information. Suggest contact L. X. 11. Investigate connection A. Virubova with (your) question. Also file B. 1005 and "5" "wait"."

I snatched up the telephone and called the Chief at the Palace. When he answered, I said: "A. stands for Anna—not "the Mattress, but Virubova."

He laughed. "Prove it."

I read the decoded telegram to him. He coughed, laughed, coughed again and said as well as his amusement would allow: "Search her house." and hung up the telephone receiver.

I grinned. Madame Anna Virubova was an intimate friend—a sacred protégé—of the Tzarina. One might as well suggest a search of the Palace. Nevertheless, the search of Madame Virubova's house was made. Ekaterina Bragnitzev, a maid at Tzarskoe Selo, was sent for and substituted for Madame Virubova's maid, who was temporarily absent to attend a "sick parent." All this took some days. Meanwhile I sent for L. X. 11, put him in possession of the facts we already had and showed him the telegram from Berlin. No result. I put him to work on the coded sheet of paper

from the hair brush, and myself examined file B. 1005 and "5" "wait." "See A. b. y. 0113. S. S." This revealed a "pedigree" card with the following notation:

"Sophie (nee Wagner) wife of Sergei Stempinska, Banker. Sophie S. German Secret Service number 222-A.B.F. and "A" 2. Dark hair, blue eyes, handsome."

I smiled sourly. "A" 2. meant "second rate." Besides I saw no connection whatever with my question. I jotted down the pedigree, however. One never knew how or when these tips might turn up.

L. X. 11 had meanwhile discovered the key to the puzzling code sheet, and was half way through decoding the message. Finished, it read: "Pay advance demanded by V. notify 222 A.B.F. amount wanted. If success V. must not escape. Entice to Ll. 5 'Muscleman.' Use empty hypo."

The message was signed "Karl."

We knew well enough who Karl was, but there was no indication whatever as to whom the message was addressed. After hours of work—work which left us mentally exhausted—we reached the following conclusions.

The message was addressed to—(unknown)— Perhaps the Weasel's Canary—V. (Volkoff (?)—222 A.B.F. was, of course, Sophie Stempinska, as the pedi-

gree file had just revealed. It was she who was to supply the "advance demanded by V (Volkoff). If Volkoff was successful in murdering the Tzar, Volkoff was to be enticed to Ll. 5 (Von der Gucht's Café (?)) where a person known as (the) "Muscle Man" was to murder Volkoff with an empty hypodermic needle.

It was all guess work, and probably bad guessing! Except the 222 A.B.F. But just as I finished jotting it down L. X. 11 struck the desk with his open palm, and exclaimed! "Of course! 1863 is the portrait painter, Rutak Indra. R—the eighteenth letter and six plus three equals nine—I is the ninth letter—one-eight—eighteen—six and three equals nine, R. I."

We shook hands, congratulated ourselves, spoke scornfully of the German Secret Service, drank Bacardi, dined, parted. I to keep my appointment with the Weasel, L. X. 11, to arrange the "illness" of Madame Virubova's maid, or of some member of her family, and the substitution of our operator from Tzarskoe Selo.

I found the Weasel shooting dice with two of his colleagues at our rendezvous, with a huge pile of notes on a table by his side. At sight of me he gathered the notes and stuffed them into his pockets, beckoned me to follow, and glided out through the back door of

the tea house. Hugging the shadows, patronizing friendly doorways, bribing the plain clothes men we couldn't avoid, he finally led me to the side entrance of a low place called the "Commercial Restaurant"—a dive kept by an ex-detective and an ex-priest. In a private dining room on the second floor, the ex-detective searched us deftly for hidden "jewelry" (knuckle dusters and Spanish gloves) found none and retired, after carefully counting the entrance fee.

Over a bottle of wine the Weasel now entirely at his ease confided in me. Among his other difficulties, since he had transferred his activities from Kieff to St. Petersburg, was the appearance of a newcomer among the chthonian habitues of his particular district—a "muscle man," as such brutes were called, who displayed unlimited wealth (from the Weasel's standpoint, of course) and always *"les gros billets,"* that is, bills of large denomination. This troubled the Weasel in two ways—envy and fear. He was a leader of a certain coterie of petty thieves, who stole more for the pure enjoyment of the life than for mere gain. Beyond their bodily wants they had slight respect for money. But according to the Weasel this newcomer was corrupting them. He was breaking down the "amateur" spirit, transforming it into a competitive force which bid fair

to eliminate, not only the real joy in their work, but also to put the true devotees, the Weasel among them, in the position of weak-kneed trucklers to the forces of law and order! He explained with meticulous care that he had no longing for martyrdom, no ambition to die by the knouts of the City Police. But, at the same time, to the self-respecting pickpocket, second story man and occasional assassin—for pay—any death was preferable to a life wherein one was forced to play second fiddle to a rank outsider. In this case a filthy Prussian, who, beside his most objectionable swashbuckling manner, was wholly devoid of principle.

It is needless to say that my friend did not express himself in the conservative phrases I have used. He was emphatic and colloquial to a degree far beyond my power to reproduce. In addition to his very natural annoyance at being displaced, he strongly suspected the man of belonging to the Secret Police—whether of Russia or of Germany he had made no attempt to discover. The Weasel was not quite what one means when one speaks of a brave man.

I sympathized with his difficulty and promised in exchange for his coöperation to rid his world of the trouble-maker. On this he rolled his eyes and pointed to the floor above. The Muscle Man and the Canary

were at that very moment, he said, in a room on the upper floor of the house in which we sat. The Weasel with four of his most trusted followers was at my disposal—provided I took the lead, of course; and, though he did not put it into words, the post of real danger.

I declined his generous offer, bade him reassure the proprietor of the place, and after shaking his hand in token of superior confidence, made my way up the back stairway to the third floor. With my pocket flash held well away from my body, I cat-footed along the hallway till I located a door which was marked with a mysterious sign in pink chalk. Bracing myself, I knocked. After a tense moment the door opened an inch, and I gave it an encouraging push with my shoulder. Before I realized what had happened I was fighting for my life. My assailant, an apelike man with muscles of steel, had one arm around my body, outside my own arms, and with the other at the back of my neck, his right leg firmly grasping mine below the knee, was forcing me into the position of a trussed fowl. Resisting the pressure with all the strength of my own not inconsiderable muscles, I nevertheless felt myself yielding. I smiled grimly, and with a sudden relaxation of all resistance, threw Mr. Muscle Man completely off his calculated balance. In the effort to

save himself from falling, he was forced to loosen the paralyzing grip on my arms and at the same time to jerk his leg free. The next instant his feet flew toward the ceiling, his head and shoulders struck the floor with a crash which shook the dilapidated building. But his resilience was amazing. He rebounded precisely as if he were made of rubber, and was on me again before I could spring to my feet. I said: "Sorry!" as a bullet from my .38 caught him between the eyes.

He threw out his arms and fell backward against the table, knocking it over and sending the sputtering wax candle spinning across the room. The place was black dark. I yanked out my flash and swung it in a half circle, bringing it to rest on the immobile form of a woman who lay across the bed, apparently unconscious, with a blond wig pulled grotesquely over her face. I rose, closed and locked the door, picked up the candle and lighted it, smoked a cigarette to dispel, if only a little, the sweaty atmosphere of the room. I made an examination of the Muscle Man's pockets, but found nothing of importance. A few bills of large denomination, a nasty clasp knife, an automatic of German make, and a metal disc engraved or chased on both sides. Then covering the body with a rug I pushed it under the bed. My nerves are a bit sensitive to ugli-

ness, and this corpse was not a pretty sight. I was sorry I had been forced to kill the man. His identity and his connection, if any, with the matter I had in hand might now be beyond discovery. I glanced at the still form of the young woman on the bed. Was she, too, dead?

With a certain diffidence I removed the yellow wig, and in the light of my flash examined her features. She was dark and decidedly handsome. Her cheeks pale and slightly sallow began to show a faint tinge of color. Evidently she had only fainted. I sat down, lighted another cigarette and waited. Presently the lady showed signs of consciousness. She sat up and felt for the wig which I held in my hand. I handed it to her and said: "Madame Stempinska, I believe?"

She covered her face with her hands and shook her head. I laughed, suggested that she needed rest and time for contemplation, offered to see her to her home, quietly, in a closed cab. She seemed immensely surprised and demanded my name. I gave it—the first name that occurred to me. She wished to know my status. I told her I was of the police. She asked what I wanted of her. I said: "Everything." She protested that she new nothing, nothing that would interest the police, even remotely. Again I suggested rest and time

for contemplation, and again that she allow me to see her to her home. After some consideration, while she speculated the alternative I suppose, she consented.

I opened the door and we went down to the street, where I found the Weasel waiting in some anxiety. I told him to get us a cab and then to notify the police of the Muscle Man's death. He thanked me with his eyes, and sped off in search of a cab.

After a wordless ride of something over half an hour I deposited Madame Stempinska at her home, and when she had disappeared inside without so much as a "thank you," I spoke quietly with the *dvornik* on duty there. Ten minutes later the pick of the special D. 13 Shadow Squad were camped around Madame Stempinska's villa, and from that moment the "Canary" was never out of our sight, not even when in the privacy of her own elaborately decorated boudoir; for the personal maid of Madame was persuaded to accept a more lucrative position with another mistress, and our Op. 33 OOX 1, took her place.

Methods of this laborious kind are more often than not exceedingly wasteful of time, and are permissible only when haste is not a factor. In this case, however, even though haste was of the utmost importance I was convinced that in the end time would be saved.

Madame Stempinska was of Irish and German extraction, which meant an ability to act a part, coupled with an inordinate obstinacy. By the time we had investigated—and found misleading—the various clews we might have forced from her, more precious hours would have been lost than gained. With the method I adopted, as experience had shown before in similar cases, she would sooner or later break down under the strain of continuous observation and the frantic pleading of her thoroughly frightened husband, and lead us directly to our quarry.

Meanwhile the Chief and I did not spend our time in transcendental speculations. The studio of M. Rutak Indra in a suburb of Berlin was broken into and "robbed." Nothing of unusual importance came of it—except that the ikon stolen from the "Sisterhood of the Virgin" was not found in the studio. That was to be expected, of course. Then, greatly to my surprise, though the Chief showed only amusement, von der Gucht sent us word from his cell in the police barracks that he wished to make a confession. He was brought into the Chief's library, and with many guttural apologies, announced that he had lied when he said that the ikon was in Berlin. It was, he now averred, in the house known to us as "Z" and "I," a small

hotel and brothel, which long ago we had discovered to be a rendezvous for international spies, and therefore immediately placed on the immune list, not as a protection to its frequenters, but simply because a spy nest known, and therefore under constant observation, was infinitely safer than scattered and unknown places of assignation.

Von der Gucht begged to be allowed to communicate with the proprietor of this place, whom he named "Feodor Olshansky," and have the ikon sent to his own café where we could inspect it, and if we wished, take possession of it. The permission was refused. Von der Gucht was sent back to his cell after a severe lecture. The Chief was on the point of ordering the spy nest raided, but I held him off for a time. An idea had popped into my head.

I had long been searching for an adequate excuse to bring Mlle. Chang, who was still in St. Petersburg, into the search for the ikon; partly because I had every confidence in her ability, but quite as much, perhaps, because I had been most extraordinarily attracted to her personally. I put the suggestion before the Chief now, not attempting to hide my admiration for the mongoose-eyed "Moon of Jade." After a moment's hesitation he agreed.

That afternoon I stopped at a jeweler's on Sodovaya Street and spent a tidy sum on a jeweled collar and pendant, then went on to my appointment with Mlle. Chang for tea à l'Anglaise. I was received with affectionate reproaches for my neglect. We conversed, drank tea. I explained the object of my visit, at the same time handing her the velvet jewel box. She opened it, exclaimed rapturously, put the collar about her gracefully modeled throat, observed herself in the mirror, and then— Well, then, I took my leave!

Two days later my breakfast was interrupted by the delivery of a package carefully wrapped in brown paper and sealed with wax. It had been brought, my servant said, by a boy in a cab. After delivering the package the boy re-entered the cab and was driven away. I unwrapped the package—The Ikon of The Trinity! I telephoned the Chief. He came at once. We examined the ikon, front and back, tapped and tested the frame, but discovered nothing of the slightest significance. It was exactly what the reproduction in the Moscow catalogue represented it to be: the traditional Trinity with the Holy Virgin. In the centre, the Father, on either side the Son and the Virgin, and above the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove with outspread wings. It was painted on wood, about 12

x 18 inches in size, and framed in an elaborately chased gold and silver frame.

It seemed a harmless enough affair and quite insignificant, when placed against the background of theft and murder, foreign intrigue, treason and all the fearful turmoil which had evidently only begun. But the Chief and I were perfectly aware it would in all probability reach prodigious proportions unless we discovered the true cause and solution of the matter, and that within a very short time indeed.

I decided to return the ikon to Grand Duchess Elizabeth with my own hands. During the few minutes it took the royal lady to identify her property I watched her face closely, while I took occasion to turn the picture face down, pretending to look for some especial identification marks. I asked permission to put a few questions, and received a curt "Non." She signed the necessary paper, and I bowed and left the room—almost bumping head on into the "Sisters," Baroness von Dudhoff and Madame von Kragenau, the two who had deserted the watch on the night of the theft. Their eyes were on Grand Duchess Elizabeth and with a look of such intense triumph that involuntarily I looked around, but too late! The exalted lady's back was to-

ward me. However the Secret Service *homonculus* nestling in my brain piped a startled warning.

"She lies! The real ikon is still to be found!"

The affair had developed into a rare puzzle. And there were several other points to be explained: the slip of paper found among Grand Duchess Elizabeth's effects with the words "August 2, 1914" in Rasputin's handwriting; the presence of Volkoff in the café of von der Gucht; the identity of his companions; the whereabouts of Rutak Indra and his object in entering Russia, which he knew well enough would almost certainly prove his grave. Obviously the incentive must be immense. A man does not deliberately place himself in such dangers unless for service of some unusual kind—or profit beyond the possibilities of his profession. And profit to Indra was scarcely likely to prove profit to Russia.

The net was spread, the cords drawing tighter with each passing hour. M. Indra must, soon or late, stand and deliver. It was but a matter of time—hours, days, weeks. There was nothing for it but to wait, and heaven knows there were enough loose ends to tie together while we waited. Among these was the fact that von der Gucht had been made aware that the false

ikon, which I had just delivered to Grand Duchess Elizabeth, was at the house "Z" and "I". How had he come by this information while under guard? Or did he already know of its existence when he was first arrested? It was clear that this ikon was substituted in order that the Service should be deluded into dropping the search for the real one. That meant that the real one was in danger of discovery and that discovery would reveal information which the Service was not meant to have. Working all this out, going over it again and again, I arrived at the conclusion that the real ikon was still in Russia. I said: "Sophie Stempinska." That brought me to the Muscle Man. I took out the metal disc and the other trifles which I had taken from his pockets. The disc was of white metal an inch and three-quarters across and about a thirty-second to a sixteenth of an inch in thickness. A coat of arms was thinly etched on the obverse; a shield, quartered, surmounted by a boar's head. In the quarters were what appeared to be three castles, upper right and lower left; and in the other two what might have been three sculls, or death's heads. The surface was too worn for me to be certain. Scratched across the shield were the numbers 7-5-7-5. On the reverse was a lion lying down on a rose and under this device

the number 0042 with three letters below: "I. G.-L." On the outer rim I made out, with the aid of a magnifying glass, a Latin motto: *"SIGNO SECRETO SIGNO."* I took down a volume on heraldry and looked up devices and mottoes. Of the devices I could find no shield bearing castles and sculls but discovered a "lion dormant on a rose" to be a symbol of secrecy. The motto, *"Signo Secreto Signo"* was attributed to the Lovensteins of Prussia—among several others. From that the rest came without difficulty, though it took time. The Frau Baronin von Lovenstein and Ekaterina von Kragenau were one and the same person! The things I had taken for sculls were owls' heads, the device of the Lovensteins, quartered with the Kragenau castles. The motto, *"Signo Secreto Signo,"* and the crest, a lion dormant on a rose, both denoting secrecy, were obviously no more than a rather extraordinary coincidence.

The Muscle Man's credentials were, then, from Madame Kragenau, whom I had seen that very morning when I delivered the false ikon to its Royal owner. The time had come for action. The affair was beginning to drag. Madame Stempinska evidently knew something—how much I could not decide—and she must be brought to terms, at once. Also there was

Madame Virubova. "Anna the Mattress," as von der Gucht had designated her. Not a pretty name. Still perhaps it was deserved. It was a positive certainty however that she was not in the secrets of the plotters. No one, not even the Tzarina, would be so foolish as to confide in Anna Virubova; the blond, fat, brainless friend of Rasputin, "Man of God," horse thief, charlatan, libertine and "Saint." Nevertheless I decided on an interview with the blond Anna, first; the brunette, Sophie, could wait.

In this case money would not help. Madame Virubova was already plentifully supplied with money. Scandal had served its time. Political pressure was out of the question with so close a friend of the Tzarina. A love affair would consume too much valuable time. Well—poor creature, she was like all stupid women, a fearful coward.

A few paces from His Majesty's private library, I cornered the plump lady, made the secret sign of an Order to which she belonged (and to which I did not), offered her my arm, and escorted her to a waiting car outside the palace. She was not frightened at first but merely puzzled. However, when we reached a certain house in Tzarskoe Selo and I changed my tone of half

raillery, half seriousness to one of command, she was struck dumb with terror.

What I said to her in that house does not matter—except that I did not threaten her even with exposure. It was nothing more than a gamble on a guilty conscience. A safe bet as a rule. But in this case, as I soon found, she was not guilty (poor stupid, frightened creature), of anything more serious than a desperate endeavor under the Tzarina's directions, to recover the stolen Ikon of The Trinity.

After some adroit questioning I managed to get from her that the ikon had been meant for shipment to Germany where reproductions of it were to be made. She was quite ignorant of the purpose of this move, but she told me that when the thing was stolen, Grand Duchess Elizabeth had sent for the Tzarina, and from that time until its return, Her Majesty had been almost frantic with anxiety. She—Madame Virubova—had been sent to meet and negotiate with the supposed thieves for the ikon's recovery. Afraid to go alone, she had begged Her Majesty to command Volkoff to accompany her. Why Volkoff? Because Volkoff was apparently without curiosity where the Royal Family's affairs were involved. If he were phlegmatic, he was

far from stupid, and in addition he knew how to deal with people of the underworld. The result of her expedition into those regions had come to nothing. The people she had met, under Volkoff's guidance—a man and a woman—had refused to negotiate with her. The man had however promised that the ikon would be returned to the Sisterhood within a few days. Madame Virubova believed, as did the Tzarina, that this promise had been fulfilled. I did not undeceive her, but asked for a description of the man and woman she had met at von der Gucht's cafe. She described Madame Sophie Stempinska—in yellow wig—and then my clear recollection of Rutak Indra.

The links in the chain were gradually forging. Madame Virubova had not learned who the actual thief was, nor the object of the theft. As for the Tzarina's anxiety and that of her sister, Her Majesty's explanation had been that if the ikon were lost the miraculous cures and holy assistance, such as the assurance of fertility to formerly barren women, which had lately been performed by the Sisterhood of the Virgin, would cease. "He" had said this. ("He" was the title by which Rasputin was invariably designated when spoken of by the Tzarina or others among his exalted devotees.)

I thanked the plump, blue-eyed little woman, wondering all the while what the horse thief Rasputin, could see in her—if indeed he saw anything—to attract a man of his extraordinary opportunities. Then I took her back to the palace.

She had undoubtedly told the truth as she knew it. The Chief agreed with me on this point, also Baron Fredericks, and that Volkoff was innocent of the attempt on His Majesty's life. The poor fellow was still under duress. We could not free him until absolute certainty was added to our personal convictions of his innocence—a condition which could hardly exist without the guilty person or persons first being in our hands. Oddly enough—miraculously some would say—Volkoff had fallen ill of the very disease to which, according to Doctor Korovin's statement to him, he had been exposed. Whether this was mere coincidence—nothing is so strange that coincidence may not actually be the veritable explanation—or whether the illness was self-induced by the man's vivid imagination, will ever remain a secret of the vast Unknown. The facts only are ours. Among these are, first that he contracted the disease; second, that he had every care and the best that medical science could provide; third, that eventually he died of the disease.

To the inexperienced it might appear that we had reached a stalemate. But I was not discouraged nor indeed was the Chief. To our experienced vision of such affairs the matter was rapidly approaching climax. The man Indra was certainly in Russia. Short of his own death he could no more escape the net cast for him than he could escape from it when once the meshes had closed about him. As for the ikon, if it were still in Russia, it could not get out any more than could Indra. Von der Gucht could be made to talk. There were in fact signs that he was about ready to volunteer what information he possessed. Madame Stempinska also would be loquacious whenever I decided to put on the screws. But the Chief and I determined to wait for Indra. He was—no doubt of it—the main source to which we would be compelled in the end.

We had scarcely come to this decision when the code lamps in the alcove flashed:

"Message L. X. 11."

I snatched a pencil. Waited. Then: "Moon of Jade contact Indra. D. 13 wanted Café des Chauve-Souris Nois. Left Bank. Message Ends."

I leaped across the intervening space between my desk and the Visitors' exit, yanked the door open, rushed pell-mell down the stairs, hailed a passing cab

and ordered speed. Twenty-two minutes and fifty-one seconds later I entered the Café des Chauve-Souris Nois, a brothel exclusively reserved for streets harlots and their trade. Mlle. Chang sat alone at a table in a corner. I joined her. She said in French:

"He is upstairs. He took poison—cyanide—but I am stronger. I choked him and then administered an antidote. He may recover." She shrugged. "He thinks it anyway, and he is very much afraid of your interrogations. I have promised him his life and safe conduct in exchange for—everything."

I gave her a long stare. She had, of course, no authority whatever to make such a promise. As to Indra's agreement to reveal "everything"—!

Mlle. Chang interpreted my stare as a reprimand—correctly enough, to be sure—and interrupted it with a *moue* of annoyance. She reminded me that she was not in the Russian service and that she had saved Indra from suicide only as a personal accommodation to a friend. If she had allowed him to die, much valuable information might have been lost.

I acknowledged her contention, and inquired the cause of M. Indra's desire to hasten the inevitable. She replied that he was entirely out of funds, could get in touch with neither von der Gucht nor Madame Stem-

pinska—the only two persons in Russia with whom he dared communicate. This predicament had forced upon him the realization that escape was impossible, and he preferred to die by his own hand rather than be forced to reveal his employers' secrets under torture. She had prevented his escape by that means, and had persuaded him to accept defeat—and life. She did not condescend to explain how she had found him, or why in such a place, and I refrained from questioning her on either point.

We mounted the noisome stairway to M. Indra's room. He was lying on a narrow cot under an open window, his face turned away from us as we entered. I closed the door a little noisily, and he turned to look at us. He recognized me instantly and started, tried to sit up, but fell back on the flat pillow with a groan. He was a man of about forty, tall, slender, with a high bridged nose, indicating English ancestry, a narrow, longish face with close-cropped mustache and beard in the manner of Van Dyke. A sensitive face—the last man on earth to undertake a mission such as he was now engaged in. Mlle. Chang spoke to him in her delicious, slightly husky tones; soothing to a degree. She assured him that he had nothing to fear, but that

in return for her services she required him to be explicit, to hold back nothing.

He smiled wanly, and asked in a weak but cultivated voice if I intended carrying out Mlle. Chang's promises to him.

I said: "If you carry out yours to her."

He wished to know how I expected to decide whether or not his information was correct and complete.

I said: "By its results."

He muttered, in German, words I could not catch. Then speaking in French—very German French—he deposed the following:

He had been ordered to proceed to St. Petersburg, obtain the Ikon of The Trinity from the Sisterhood of the Virgin, make an exact copy of it and return the copy to the Sisterhood. A catalogue containing a representation of the ikon had been sent to him with instructions to deliver it to Grand Duchess Elizabeth, but the catalogue had disappeared from his studio in Berlin the day before he left that city for St. Petersburg.

Upon securing possession of the ikon he was to repaint the original according to certain directions and deliver it to B. 003, an Austrian agent in Moscow,

where colored reproductions were to be made and printed in thousands, a process which he, Indra, was to superintend in order to assure good results. That was the extent of his assignment.

I asked what changes he had been ordered to make on the Ikon of The Trinity. He dismissed the interruption with an impatient movement of his head, and continued in his bad French.

He had presented his credentials to Grand Duchess Elizabeth at the Sisterhood and had been refused access to the ikon. She told him that since her agreement to coöperate with his employers she had been informed of an intention on their part which she utterly refused to countenance, and in which she would take no part. Indra immediately communicated this intelligence to his superiors, and a few days later received instructions to enter the Sisterhood at an early hour of the morning of a certain day and take the ikon away with him. He followed his instructions to the letter, took the ikon to the house "Z" and "I" made the copy and the changes in the original. When all was ready Von der Gucht came to the house to inspect the picture. He brought with him the woman whom he called the Canary, and at the same time told of a person,—a woman also—

"Anna the Mattress" who represented the Tzarina and who wished to negotiate for the return of the ikon to the Sisterhood. Indra corroborated Madame Virubova's account of the matter, and also that of the Weasel as to the murder of S. 66. He had recognized S. 66 as a man whom he had seen on a train coming from Berlin. S. 66 covered him with his revolver, but was knocked out by a blow from behind delivered by von der Gucht. Together they took S. 66 to von der Gucht's car and drove to a deserted spot a mile or so further on the outskirts of the city. The poison was administered to the still unconscious man before he was thrown out.

It was, Indra said, with a grimace of disgust, his first experience of the utterly ruthless methods necessitated by the requirements of the Secret Service, and forced upon him the decision to die rather than fall into the hands of the Russian Police, of which he supposed me —God forbid!—to be a member.

In reply to my questions he said that the cause of Grand Duchess Elizabeth's change of mind was undoubtedly information of a plot against the Tzar's life. How she came by this knowledge Indra did not know. As for himself it was a revelation of the extent to

which he was involved, and served only to fortify his resolve to die in the event that other escapes were cut off.

This was the extent of his knowledge. He had nothing more to tell me. Of the purpose and intended destination of the color prints of the ikon he knew nothing; nor anything whatever of the date "August second 1914." He volunteered the surmise, however, that Von der Gucht, of whom he seemed to have acquired a kind of horror, was the agent in charge of the plot against the Tzar's life. Of Mesdames Virubova and Stempinska he knew only that the first had represented herself as coming from the Tzarina and the second as a person to whom he had been instructed by Von der Gucht to apply for funds when needed—not at her home, but at the house where I had had my encounter with the "Muscle Man." This latter individual he understood from Von der Gucht to be a certain "Mike the Fin," a professional assassin, and employed in this particular instance to do away with His Majesty's valet Volkoff, but of the reasons for this proposed murder, he professed to know nothing.

The repainted Ikon of The Trinity was still in the secret cupboard in the house "Z" and "I" where it had been put upon its completion. Indra refused to de-

scribe the changes he had made, since, as he pointed out, I would see them for myself. I closed the interview with a promise to observe Mlle. Chang's condition of "life and safe conduct" for Indra, with the proviso, however, that his information proved authentic. Then I telephoned for an ambulance and had him conveyed to a hospital, under guard.

Mlle. Chang asked permission to go to the house "Z" and "I" and recover the ikon. But since the cupboard in which the picture was hidden had to be opened by pressing a panel in the wall, I suspected a trap of some kind—a hidden bomb, perhaps, or poisoned needle. The service was continually encountering such medieval devices and sometimes, to our serious cost. I insisted therefore on accompanying her and attending to the cupboard myself.

The house door was opened to us by a black-browed, surly rascal, fat, greasy, odorous, who refused us admission with a curt: *"Polno."* I attempted to push by him, but he blocked the passage too completely. I barked a police order at him and whipped out my .38. With incredible swiftness, for a man of his bulk, he stooped and lunged at my groin with a sailor's clasp knife he had concealed in his sleeve. The crack of my .38 was almost simultaneous with that of Mlle. Chang's

automatic. Our friend's knife missed its goal by a fraction of an inch, as his huge body sprawled at our feet. Without waiting to ascertain which of us—or whether both—had saved my skin, I leapt across the threshold and ran up the narrow stairway to the room Indra had described. It was empty. The entire house seemed deserted. I found the panel without difficulty, bade Mademoiselle Chang, who had followed me up the stairs, stand clear, and pressed the spot indicated by a dark smudge. There was a clicking sound behind the panel which lasted for ten or twelve seconds, and then a section of the wall, about two feet square and a foot or so to the right of the panel I had pressed, opened out disclosing a wall pocket and the unframed Ikon of The Trinity leaning against the back of the cupboard.

With a suppressed exclamation of horror and disgust, I started back as a wave of comprehension broke over me and I took in the whole plot—the means—the purpose—and the diabolical disregard of all the canons of faith and honor and decency one takes for granted as existing between nations or individuals! Then, in order to prevent Mlle. Chang from seeing the thing, I sprang forward and snatching it up, tucked it under my coat.

In the hall at the bottom of the stairs I found a telephone, and called the City Police to attend to the carrion in the doorway. A crowd of idlers and frequenters of such districts had gathered together across the street and eyed us curiously as we left the ill-fated house.

Thirty minutes later, after a brief expression of gratitude to Mlle. Chang and a promise to call upon her in the immediate future, I entered the Chief's library. He greeted me expectantly. I drew the repainted ikon from under my coat and laid it on the desk in front of him. He stared at it, his face gray with rage.

The painting was identical with the one I had taken to Grand Duchess Elizabeth. The conventional Trinity with the Virgin. The Father, flanked on either side by the Son and the Virgin, and up above the Holy Spirit in the form of a bird with out-stretched wings. The changes in the ikon before us now, consisted in the fact that the Father's face was that of the Tzar, the Son's that of Rasputin, the Virgin's that of the Tzarina and the Holy Spirit was the "double eagle" of the Russian Imperial Arms!

The purpose if this blasphemous picture was to reproduce it in color, print thousands of copies, and distribute them throughout the Ukraine, the Crimea, es-

pecially the Don basin and among the Siberian Cossacks, who were nearly all of the Old Believers—the devout religionists of persecuted faith. Had this purpose succeeded, immediately on the death of the Tzar, when the Empire would have been seething with conflict between the adherents of the reactionists and the liberals, not to speak of the various revolutionary elements, there would have risen above it all the thunder of curses against the *Niemka,* the German woman on the throne of the Monomachs, and Prussia would have dictated her terms of blackmail!

That was my interpretation of the affair, at any rate, and the Chief agreed with me. He took the view that war with Germany was the only possible solution for this constant treachery, a war that would involve France and the Balkan states, with Italy, in all probability, on the side of France and Russia. Otherwise one of these Prussian plots would some day succeed, and while Austria marched into the Ukraine and on up to the gates of Moscow, Germany would train her siege guns on Paris. And Russia's eastern ambitions would vanish into the mists of forgotten dreams.

I said: "von der Gucht must be interrogated."

The Chief smiled sourly and opening a drawer of his desk took out a folded sheet of paper which he

handed to me. I opened it. It was a sheet of the Tzar's private correspondence paper and on it in His Majesty's hand was scribbled with evident haste:

"Release Franz Von der Gucht without delay. No further action.

N. I."

On the lower half of the paper was a faint smudge. I indicated this smudge and said: "Rasputin?"

The Chief took a thumb print of the Monk's from the desk and pushed it toward me, with a magnifying glass. I studied the print and then the smudge. The sworls were identical!

I sat down, put my head in my hands and laughed uncontrollably. The situation in which we were placed was nothing less than ridiculous. The time, the effort, the excitement, the danger, and with it all the extraordinary accomplishment in discovering and circumventing the plotters and disposing of the plot—all made abortive—and the Service humiliated and demoralized by a whim of such unparalleled magnitude; a mere chance whim induced—not a doubt of it—when His Majesty was in his cups and thus subject to any suggestion of no matter what insane purpose from the *Niemka* or the moujik, Rasputin! Both traitors to the Empire. The one through a mistaken, if sincere be-

lief that the Autocracy was doomed under the weak and vacillating policies of Nicholas II, and could be preserved for her son Alexis only by the strong support of Prussia. The other, Rasputin, through cupidity and moujik malice.

I said: "You have obeyed the order to release Von der Gucht?"

The Chief answered that he had.

I said: "Madame Stempinska?"

"Turned over to the Political Police with her husband."

There was silence for a time, then with an oath the Chief spat out the single word: "Rasputin!" and as I turned toward him he made the Roman sign of death.

It was scarcely necessary for me to express agreement. As a matter of fact I had been on the point, before the Chief spoke, of putting the same idea into words, but had come to the decision that there were other matters to be concluded first. The evident determination of Russia's enemies to create disaffection in South Ukraine and the Don Basin, and by methods which hesitated at nothing, not even regicide, seemed to me a condition much too intolerable to be left where we were commanded to leave it.

My eyes closed, I sat hunched in my chair, oblivious

Courtesy of Count O. —— U. S. S. R.

Sketch of one of the Stars (much enlarged) in the necklace of Seven Silver Stars, which contained the messages that enabled D. 13 and the Chief to foil the plot to assassinate Grand Duke Nicholas Nicolaevitch.

CASE: D2979—0011
File D 13: .at. cpr. "C" (sbcr—1)

Death of The Christ of the Steppes

From a Letter of D-13
To Mr. W. H. Hauck

MIDNIGHT FOUND US STILL DISCUSSING, ARGUING, QUARreling. Tray after tray of cigarette ashes and stumps went into the waste basket. The room was a cloud of smoke. My tongue and lips felt baked. I took out my pocket flask. The Chief drank. I drank. We went over plan after plan, each failure-proof, each unworkable, one for this reason, one for that, another because I refused to undertake it, or the Chief refused to countenance it. Each of us utterly refusing to involve anyone but himself. Yet the monk must go. There were three ways—poison, steel, lead—and one more—"accident." I advocated one of the three; he the fourth. We fought it out. Neither would yield. We dined, drank, smoked, took up our quarrel—to no conclusion. That is to say to no definite plan; but we reached a conclusion nevertheless. It was this: P. 63, on duty at the Imperial Palace, was to fall ill, and I would take his place. The rest was in the hands of Fate.

How little we realized at that moment the card old Fate had up her sleeve! I said to myself as I left the

Chief that morning: "Mine are the hands of fate." Convinced in my egoism that this degenerate ex-horse thief bore no more a charmed life than I or any one of the millions like us in that fateful country. I was to learn better. But to be fair to myself, I do not even now credit his immunity from death to any divine or to any satanic intervention. In retrospect it is obvious enough that the Black Monk was as much a member of the royal family as the Tzar or the Tzarina or the Tzarevitch, Alexis. One could not shoot the Tzarina through the head when one discovered her a traitor to the Crown and to the Empire. One could not plunge a bayonet into the Emperor's heart when he flatly refused to see the Empire disintegrating before his very eyes, and flatly refused to listen to the voice of treason shouting in his ears. So one could not deliberately destroy the Tzarevitch's sole hope of life by putting poison in the monk's wine. For in all justice, whether there was or was not a grain of truth in the monk's repeated assertions that without him the Tzarevitch could not live, they—the father, mother and son—believed it true. And who am I to blame them? A hundred times and more, the poor frightened boy was relieved by the monk's intercession in his behalf. How much the attacks were induced it is now impossible to discover.

The fact remained that they did occur and when Rasputin took a hand did cease.

I was present on one of these occasions, and can therefore testify at first hand. The Tzarevitch was bleeding profusely from the mouth and nose. The Palace was in an uproar. Rasputin could not be found. Suddenly he appeared from nowhere—an impressive figure indeed. He was in black, a monk's robe with an amber cross on his chest. He strode into the room, his face gray, his eyes bulging, his breath whistling through his clenched teeth—a grim warrior come to do battle with a grim enemy! And well he might, for if the little Alexis had bled to death the monk's life would not have been worth a lead kopek. But he seemed completely oblivious to the possibility of failure. He stood upright before the frightened child and invoked his God, or gods, or whatever powers he served—in words so jumbled and distorted by his apparent rage that it was impossible to understand a single one. The nurse wiped the blood from the Tzarevitch's lips, bathed his face with cold water. The flow had stopped!

I make no comment save this: If at that moment it had been in my power to rid the Empire of Gregory Rasputin, I would have stayed my hand! At that

moment, yes. Later, it was a different matter altogether.

A few days after I had replaced the indisposed P-63 at the Winter Palace I followed the monk to the Tzarina's private apartments. He was stopped in the ante room by His Majesty's valet Troupe. I listened to their argument. The Tzarina was alone. The Tzar was in Constanza plotting with Charles of Roumania. Troupe refused the monk admittance, till the Tzarevitch's name was brought in; then with a final protest the valet gave way and opened the door. Rasputin went in, and a moment later the sound of key and bolt was distinctly audible. I pressed the concealed button on the side of the little door which led to the tiny private chapel adjoining the Tzar's dressing rooms. I had hardly had time to cross the room when I heard the click of the mechanism again. Some one had followed me into the chapel. Stepping behind the curtain which hung over the doorway leading to the dressing rooms I waited, my ears wide, my .38 in my hand. There was a slight rustle of garments—a woman's—and then the almost soundless footsteps of a person in bare, or stocking feet, crossing the tiled floor toward my hiding place. It was almost dark in the chapel, the only light coming from the votive lamps on the

little altar at the far end. I pulled the curtain aside slightly and was almost struck by a young woman who brushed past me and went on into the dressing rooms. Evidently she had not seen me. So intent was she on her own errand that the slight sound I made as I stepped back into the chapel did not attract her attention. Watching her through the aperture between the curtain edge and the door casing I saw her go on into the corridor which led directly to the Tzar's bedroom, and deftly reach behind a figure—an ikon of the Virgin —which among several others stood on shelves or hung on the walls. Immediately she returned and opening a drawer in a dressing table not six feet from my peeping eye, took some papers from it. Shutting and locking the drawer she replaced the key behind the ikon, then laughing to herself and half dancing she came straight toward me. I flattened myself against the wall, slipped around the curtain as she lifted it and passed again into the chapel. She ran lightly across the floor, stopped long enough to draw on her slippers, then cautiously opened the door and went out; but not before I had recognized her as the Princess G., ex-First Maid of Honor to Her Majesty the Tzarina and the last direct survivor of one of the oldest and most honored houses in Russian history.

Whether this interruption actually saved, for the time being, the life of the ex-horse thief I shall never know. It had been my intention to intrude into the Tzarina's rooms and discover for myself precisely why the monk was there. I had no scruples—none whatever—against emptying my service .38 into his filthy carcass if—if what I discovered was what I expected to discover! I had no fear of being apprehended. The shots would be heard, of course, and the Palace aroused. But long before the Tzarina's locked and bolted door had been forced, I should have been out of the room via the chapel, and joining in the uproar. As for the scandal which inevitably would have followed such a proceeding, I had considered that, and had convinced myself that I was forced by a choice of evils, of which scandal was the lesser.

I did not carry out my intention now because I realized at once that the theft of the papers from the Tzarina's dressing table had been arranged by the monk. The Princess G. had, two months before, become "personal secretary" to Gregory Rasputin, and lived in his house. It was obvious then that his visit to the Tzarina was planned merely to keep her occupied while the Princess entered and made away

with the papers. It was imperative therefore that I follow and discover what she was about to do with them. She went straight as an arrow to the monk's house. I telephoned Headquarters and went back to my duties at the Palace. A few hours later when I reported in the Chief's library I was told by him that he had turned the matter over to General Foullon of the City Police. In the course of routine the Chief was notified that the Princess had been arrested, tried, convicted and sentenced to death. She was now in the hands of the Medical department. She was examined by Professor R., the highest medical legal authority in Russia, and found to be "suffering from morbid nymphomania."

The Tzar intervened. The death sentence was commuted to "service in the interests of the Empire."

Later on, a matter of weeks, we learned that after an interview with General Klimovitch of the Political Police, she had been enrolled in the "Feminine abnormal squad" as an agent provocateur and given special privileges. Also she was transferred for political reasons to Moscow. There, she rented in her own name a luxurious apartment in the Souchareva-Sadovaya Street. Her secret telephone numbers were

"Police 20," "Tzarskoye Selo 6," and "Department 11." The house was guarded by plain clothes men as well as by uniformed gendarmes.

The abortive death sentence had become a grim reality. A single misstep, a single mistake, a mere suspicion of treachery, and her life would be snuffed out like a pinched candle flame.

The stolen documents proved to be only what we had already seen; that is, originals of certain correspondence between the Tzarina and the German Emperor, of which P-63 had long ago made copies, for the Chief, and which were now pronounced by the Minister of the Interior to be "clever forgeries." When I learned from the Chief that he had turned the matter over to the City Police I understood immediately that the affair would be bungled. Immediately I took action to ascertain if the Princess's faithful maid Xenia had been detained with her mistress. As I clearly foresaw, she had not. With General Klimovitch's permission I went to the Princess's house and made a thorough search. Result: nothing. As no papers or letters of an incriminating nature had been found at Rasputin's house, I surmised—knew to a certainty in fact—that the Maid Xenia had got away with them.

There might be nothing among them of interest to

the Service. On the other hand there might be the very thing I sought to enable us to end Rasputin's career. Two days later my man located the maid in the house of a relative in a little village outside of Schlussebürg. For a few silver rubles I bought her allegiance and the Princess's papers. I wasted my money and got only disappointment for my pains. There was nothing of the slightest significance that could be successfully used against the Black Monk; enough indeed, to have hanged almost any other man in Russia, but not Rasputin. There were letters, principally from jealous women, I judged, a score or more coupling the Tzarina's name with that of the monk's. Nothing new in that. One letter from the Minister of the Interior, which would have cost him a pretty penny in blackmail if I had not "rescued" and destroyed it. And a morocco bound diary with clasps and a lock of gold, with the Princess's arms in diamonds, rubies and sapphires on a shield of enamel.

The entries in the diary were scattered, that is to say, not consecutive. There were gaps of days, sometimes weeks, perhaps longer. It was impossible to discover, since there were few dates, often not even days of the week. There was much that was merely trivial, such as the illness of one of her dogs—she had

three—visitors who came and gossiped, church meetings, her own feelings about certain persons and personages whom her mother, an invalid, had recommended to her attention. Taken altogether, however, it made an interesting, if rather horrifying, record of the swift transition—within the space of a few months apparently—from a quite normal girl of social prominence and unusual beauty to a creature who positively wallowed in the mire of sexual debauchery. Nor did the transition stop at mere nymphomania; before the end it included abnormalities spoken of only in clinical and scientific laboratories.

That was later however, much later. Meanwhile the excerpts from the diary, which follow, are, so far as I can judge, consecutive. They are of course stripped of all irrelevances and expurgated of considerable matter which it is by no means possible to transcribe.

"Christ is risen!

"Easter Day! The day of the White Christ!

"My silent friend, my little diary, congratulate me, kiss me, speak to me! Tomorrow I am to be presented at Court, to their gracious Majesties. And then—then, O, keeper of my girlish secrets—my wishes, my dreams will come true! I shall be Maid of Honor to Her

Majesty Tzarina Alexandra of Russia. I am praying before my little ikon—What happiness, sweet Virgin. What happiness.

"Only a few minutes ago Madame Jossele sent me my court dress; and dear Rosa Bing-Dighton a spray of her famous orchids. Sleep—I must go to bed, my little friend, and as nursie used to say, count the pearls in Our Lady's Crown. Now I lock you in your comfy-umfy rosewood box, that dear Volya Kleibmichel gave me on my sixteenth birthday. Good-night. *Beaux rêves. Doux rêves!*

Tuesday.

"Cou-cou, mon petit! Lend me your snow white pages so that your "Big Friend" may share with you her joy, her heart's desire—everything! Attention! Princess G. of Russia, First Maid of Honor to her Imperial Majesty the Tzarina Alexandra, salutes you! Listen, O my precious one. See what I have done now. A tear dropped. The ink is running and James, my English butler informs me that the terrible Baroness Rosnau von Holtz has telephoned for the fourth time and is quite impatient! and—and—and—so many ands! I really must give Bou-Bou and Chippie their breakfast; keep an appointment with Madame Jossele, my

coutouriere; attend Countess Dymka's bridge, and write that letter to poor dear mother who suffers so with her silly fears for my spiritual growth. La, la! What luck! I who am ten times, ten times watched over by all these old dragons and am now a part of the Court. Perhaps it is not so bad for me to be watched over. I have thoughts my little one—naughty, naughty thoughts! This very minute I feel—I feel—quickly now—here is your little nest. (A smudge and a pencil drawing of a grandfather's clock with the hands pointing to 1:30.)

Friday, midnight.

"Voila! I am keeping a secret tryst with my lover—you, my sweet little diary. My valiant pen, do your duty. Thus begins the wonderful tale of how a steppe-born princess became First Maid of Honor to Her gracious Majesty Alix, Tzarina of All Russias.

"Long before the Church parade on the second day of Easter was over, crowds of sightseers thronged the streets trying to squeeze into every available space allowed them by the over-zealous mounted gendarmes and City Police—Prut! Ces Gendarmes. Escorted by Countess Pallenburg, Lady-in-Waiting to Grand Duchess Nina, and by a squadron of the Chevalier Guard Regiment, I drove to the Winter Palace soon

after ten in the morning and retired to the private apartment with the Ladies of Honor. The Tzar in the familiar uniform of The Scots Greys, the Tzarina and the Grand Duchesses Olga and Anastasia, also drove from the Anitchkoff Palace about the same time amidst frantic cheering and the thunder of guns. They were preceded by a detachment of the Imperial Circassian Escort; picked men in gorgeous, scarlet uniforms.

"Cou-cou, mon petit! How exciting life is! I am on fire! On fire!

"The reception rooms of the Winter Palace are justly famed for their oriental beauty, unrivalled in Europe for their size and magnificence. Dear little diary they are the rooms where the Tzars of Russia have dictated their wishes to the proud ambassadors of the other nations; they are a part of my glorious country! For this occasion they were filled to their capacity by a variegated multitude whose jewels, brilliant uniforms, plumes and gold lace contrasted strangely with the black robes of the dignitaries of the Orthodox Church. The Ladies-in-Waiting and the Maids of Honor occupied the Hall of Armorial Bearings with its historic collection of gold and silver plate. I wore my court costume, a sarafan of the sixteenth century, with a headdress of white velvet ornamented with

pearls and a long silk veil. Beyond the Malachite Chamber are the Tzar's private apartments, including the Throne Room of St. George from which the Imperial procession started at about twelve and a half o'clock. As the great gold and silver doors were thrown open for the cortege, the Metropolitan and Palace clergy, in their ancient Byzantine stoles and copes, rendered the Lord's Prayer, accompanied by the beautiful voices of the Pages' Corps. First came scarlet liveried servants (how I love scarlet!); then two hundred Gentlemen of the Chamber, Masters of Ceremonies and the nobility of both capitals. The Marshal of the Court, Baron Fredericks, and the officers of the Cossack Ataman Guards, preceded their Majesties and the Dowager Empress Marie Feodorovna (dreadful old dragon!). Three Ladies-in-Waiting introduced the new Maids of Honor to the Tzarina, as they curtsied before her throne, receiving their diamond *chiffres*.

"*Ouf, mon petit,* I'm afraid I made a terrible *faux pas*. You see I had a slight cold and my nose was very red, so just as my name was called, I danced across the room and powdered my nose nicely, using my pocket mirror. Then in my haste to get back into the moving ranks of the debutantes, I nearly upset poor, dear Baroness Kronsenstern who was standing at

the head of the foreign colony. Her Majesty smiled, she had a lovely warm smile, and when I bent down to kiss her hand, I heard her whisper in English "Never mind, my dear." At least I imagined she said something very sweet.

"Goodness gracious! It is nearly four, and I must put you back to bed in your rosewood box. Yes, yes, I confess, last night at Countess Dymka's bridge party, I lost a trifling sum. Bah! My dear moujiks often pay their landlords in advance!

"To bed, to bed sleepy head. Tou, tou, tou! Mr. Sandman please come in! Please cool this fire in my soft body or I shall go mad! mad! mad.

Sunday.

"Chere Cou-cou, have I neglected you so? Come, come it is not my fault. I have been unhappy. Why? Who can tell? *'J'ai le cafard'* as General K. says. Miss Sylvia Crosswell, my American friend, calls it 'blues.' She says I get too excited. I do. But who is to blame? Is not fire excited? Does it not snap and crack and jump about and burn? Burn? Burn? And I have lost too much at bridge. I must win or I must stop playing. *Quelle patisserie!*

"James, dropping his 'H's' and picking them up at

the wrong time, has just handed me the cure for my 'blues.' Dear God—or is it Mr. Devil, An invitation from Countess de Normand for roulette—rou-rou-lette. But dare I? Clovis De N.'s rugs are genuinely Oriental and genuinely ancient. So is she—ancient—and indecently blond. All the same she is *une bonne vielle.* She will not allow me to lose. I shall go! There little *cou-cou,* into your rosy box till tonight. *Au revoir!*

"Three-and-a-half o'clock. But who cares. Sleep? How can I? Dear Jesus! I lost! I have nothing more. My pearls? No! Dear God, no! Poor, dear mother—it would break her heart—and dear Alix (Tzarina) would never forgive me! But money! Mother—mother—what shall I do?

Wednesday.

"I have not slept for two nights. I must have sleep. I am losing my looks. Four cocktails at Mitya's last night brought back my courage, but it has deserted me again. Clovis told me of the Society money-lender, Rubenstein. I am afraid of him. Money! Money! Money!

Thursday.

"M. Rubenstein has saved my life—my honor, any-

way. I had no idea my Venetian pearls were worth so much! Nearly 20,000 gold rubles. I am rich once more. But my poor dear pearls! Never mind. I shall soon win it all back, and good old Rubenstein has promised not to tell a soul—ever, ever, ever!

"My pearls are gone! I can't ever pay the interest due—unless M. Rubenstein—how I hate the fat swine! —unless he can get me a third mortgage on my estate near Moscow.

"My pearls are safe for another month. I had to become a thief—how else could I have saved them? Tell me, Mr. Devil? Tell me, what next? They can do nothing. The Moscow Charity Society does not need it as much as I do—and this time I shall *win!* Win! Win! Win!

Monday (the same time).

"Le Roi s'amuse!" Mister Devil, I know you are over stocked and there's a slump in the soul market, so that my poor little soul does not interest you. But my soft body—is it not a nice bait for you to use for a soul you fish for? Come Mr. Devil use me I beg of you—

"At last! At last! I am excited! I am on fire. If I cannot have relief I shall be consumed. My blood will

burst through my white skin and drown me. I am to see him—Him! The Black Monk. This morning I was giving a fencing lesson to Tania in the mauve room of the Winter Palace and Madame N. telephoned —good old Nazivina!—requesting my presence in the library of the palace on a matter of the gravest importance. I went at once. She told me that I was to go home and make myself ready for the greatest experience of my life. I was to be allowed entrée to a service in her own rooms at five o'clock. Grisha Rasputin would conduct the service and if he found spiritual response in me, I should become initiate. She impressed upon my "youthful" mind the spiritual purpose of all that I shall see and hear *and feel!*

"There's only one explanation of why I am impelled to record in my diary that day when I, Princess G., first Maid of Honor to Her Majesty Alexandra, Tzarina of All Russias, became Gregory Rasputin's mistress. I am mentally sensual! Mentally as well as physically. I keep my body sensitive and fit. O how sensitive! And I am intemperate, insatiable.

"I went to Madame N.'s rooms at five to the second. She led me into a large room sparsely furnished, with walls of Mokathan alabaster, and a canopy of cloth of gold which masked a vaulted ceiling. Beside myself

and Nazivina there were three ladies in the room—Her Majesty, Grand Duchess Nina, and Princess Olga V. T. (Vorodtzov Tashkov).

"A silver incense burner stood before a marble altar between the high draped windows and a faint spiral of smoke from its dying fires stole grayly upward. In the shaded light of a Persian oil lamp I could just make out the huddled form of a man, sitting at the head of a table covered with a cloth of white Bokhara silk. Slowly the man arose, lurched across the room and lighted a tall wax candle before the ikon of Our Lady of Kazan, *using the stump of his perfumed cigarette.* I heard a short, sharp exclamation of fear from Princess V. T. (Vorodtzov-Tashkov) and Her Majesty's command in French—"Silence mesdames"!

Gregory Rasputin, known as the "Black Monk" of Russia, crawled to the corner of the room where the Tzarina sat, mouthed a coarse oath and wiped his face with the hem of her dress. He shouted wildly, challenged God to punish him, ordered Princess V. T. (Vorodtzoff-Tashkov) to join him in a ribald song of the slums. A lambent flame played through his eyeballs, his face was waxen, yellow, rigid. He stamped his feet in a spasm of religious fury, and spun round and round like a great top, whipped into frenzied action by the low singing of Mesdames Nazivina and

Grand Duchess Nina. Seizing an ivory ikon from the altar he pressed it to my lips then sent it spinning across the full length of the room.

He beckoned to me to follow him to the altar and made me kneel. Then he took some black rye biscuits from his riding boot and gave me a piece of one of them, mumbled some words and taking a goblet of wine from Nazivina poured some yellow stuff from a glass vial into it, and gave it to me. I sipped a tiny bit. He grasped my head and bent it back, then held the goblet to my lips till I had drained it. I covered my face. I was unaccountably afraid. Soon I felt too warm—the air of the room became oppressive. I stood up intending to go out to the corridor, my knees were weak. He threw an arm about my shoulders, and half dragged me toward a door at the other end of the room. I began to burn; something snapped in my brain. I tried to kiss his hand—

. . . . . .

"Her Majesty came to me. She said! 'Glory to the Chosen one!'

"I said: 'I am his—utterly.'

"She smiled a knowing smile and whispered 'Are you happy, child? You have saved my son!'

"I wept—"

The entries which follow, covering many months probably, are either too far removed from the case in point, or too obscene to record here. It is not until the day, and very probably the hour of her arrest that I found an entry which corroborated my suspicions and made them a certainty. It read as follows:

"Success! Grisha will be pleased with me! I found them where he said I should find them. Their political value must be immense. With these in his hands Grisha can dictate his demands to the Tzar, who would die rather than have such incriminating letters from Her Majesty become public! I shall be rewarded with love!—the Beast! Why do I love the black beast! Why? They call him 'A moujik, all knots and ugliness—with the face of an inebriate who makes and unmakes bishops!' He seems to believe I am his in spite of his gross vices—in spite of his extremes—and he is right! The abominations which he openly practices I feel are milestones on the road to spiritual perfection and salvation. He may be of the Devil, as some people say, but I believe as he does that sexual frenzy is the crowning summit of religious ecstasy. O, if only he——"

This entry breaks off abruptly; probably at the news brought to her by a maid that Col. Koumitaroff of the

Political Police was in the house. There was not time enough for everything; only the diary in which she was writing and the personal letters could be saved, since they were in the room with her. The documents stolen from the Tzarina's chamber were found in Rasputin's rooms on the floor below. With the information gained from these revealing pages in addition to the conclusions I had already drawn, I put my mind to work on a plan to involve Rasputin in a plot against the Emperor's person. Treason against the Empire was not enough. The Tzar seemed always inclined to pardon and in some instances to reward traitors. But treason which aimed itself against His Majesty's person threw him into transports of rage.

I foresaw no great obstacles. The monk was as insatiable in the matter of money as he was in the matter of lechery. It put no strain on my ingenuity to concoct a trap for him. I had concocted many for others, and had no failures to record. This time it was simplicity itself. Siminovitch, Rasputin's private secretary, was a member of the Social-Revolutionary party and had been of use to us in more than one difficult case involving this party. It was, in fact, largely due to Siminovitch that the man Boris (Boruch) Gromitzer, alias Petroff, alias Steliansky, party name "Voron," was

apprehended and executed. On the other hand it was close to a certainty that he had assisted in the escape of the party council and of one, Chekhov, whom the Service was anxious to interrogate. Obviously Siminovitch was a traitor to both the Socialist-Revolutionary councils and to the Service. With his connivance, then, Rasputin could be lured into a plot purporting to be for the capture of the revolutionary leaders, but when "unearthed" by me would reveal a conspiracy headed by Rasputin, its purpose to assassinate the Tzar and turn the Government over to the revolutionists.

I was excited. I took my plan to the Chief in his library. He approved it. While we talked the code lamps flashed. The message was being taken down by the secretaries in the rooms below us. Nevertheless we watched the lamps glow and flash and glow—the Chief mechanically jotting down the words as they were spelled out. . . . Three green together, flash—red glow. All out. "Message ends."

The Chief rose and handed me the paper on which he had automatically decoded the message:

> "Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria and (her highness the) Duchess assassinated at Sarejevo in Bosnia by Gabirle Princip."

I read, shrugged, tossed the paper on the desk and went on with what I had been saying when the code lamps interrupted me. But the Chief seemed preoccupied. He pointed to the paper I had so carelessly thrown aside. Then he caught up a telephone and notified the Political Police of the message. We discussed the assassinations. The Chief reminded me of the seething hatreds among the Balkan nations, which had been born and nurtured within the past twenty-four months; Austria's gradual loss of prestige; the attitude of Hötzendorff, Austria's chief of staff, in relation to Serbian Expansion; and the slow but inescapable encirclement the Central Powers, Germany and Austria, were undergoing. Rasputin was momentarily forgotten. The Chief continued to enlarge upon his idea, certain that Berchtold would not lose this opportunity to subdue Serbia and thus cement the ties between Austria and Bulgaria. He went so far, indeed, as to surmise that the Foreign Minister had instigated the assassinations. Russia could not stand by and see her Eastern ambitions balked by Austria—at the behest of Germany, no doubt. He prayed that he might be right. I demurred. He insisted. War was the sole hope of saving Russia from the steadily rising tide of revolution. The Central powers would be crushed by

the sudden and irresistible pressure of the circle already pressing inward. Italy would be forced into the conflict. The elimination of Rasputin would occur automatically and immediately. The Romanoffs would come to their senses. The revolutionary element in the country would be thrown out like so much rotten timber, leaving the empire once more a homogeneous nation under a just and powerful government.

His logic was irresistible. I agreed. Twenty-four hours later I was on my way to Vienna. There I learned without difficulty that war was inevitable. Preparations were well under way. The General Staff had already printed maps of the districts covering fifty miles either side of the border, the entire distance from the Baltic to the Black Sea.

As the Baron Von der Plaunitz, I became enamored of a certain Fräulein Von B., a buxom lady whom I had seen once upon a time in the company of a certain Russian Staff Officer now at Headquarters. As I had anticipated, the Fräulein's heart was not well fortified. My siege was scarcely opposed. Under my ardent lovemaking, and even more ardent "patriotism," she became an open book to my insatiable curiosity, and soon revealed that she was associated with the German Secret Service, a fact of which I was, of course,

already aware. In return I produced my "credentials" as an operator in the Austrian Service. We exchanged confidences; and among other interesting and important information I secured through her, Fräulein B. gave me the details I afterward used in the detection and conviction of the Russian Staff Officer, Col. Myassoyedov, in whose company I had first seen her. She also enabled me to clear up the mystery of the date: "August second, 1914," which figured so prominently in the affair of the stolen Ikon of The Trinity.

This date, Fräulein B. insisted, was the day which the Russian War Office had decided on for mobilization of the army, in connection with certain negotiations, secret agreements, between the Tzar of Russia and Charles of Rumania, and of which Russia's ally, France, was fully cognizant.

What else I learned from this young woman, and through the opportunities that my acquaintance with her afforded, sent me flying north again to get in touch with Grand Duke Nicholas Nicolaevitch. With the characteristic frankness of the true soldier, he immediately turned the information I had secured for him, over to the War Minister, thereby all unconsciously insuring the disasters of Tannenberg and the Massurian Lakes—a mistake the Com-

mander-in-Chief acknowledged in my presence when the news of these battles and the extent of our losses finally reached him. I was given carte blanche then to ferret out the cause of Rennenkampf's delay in going to the assistance of Samsonov, and his mysterious recall when at last he was on his way; also the unaccountable failure of Zhilinsky to answer Samsonov's appeal for aid. The Chief had the answers to these questions in his pocket. He had been closely watching the movements of Col. Myassoyedov of the General Staff, and the War Minister General Sukhomlinov. With my photostatic copies of papers in the intelligence dossiers of Berchtold and those lately acquired from the German command at Tannenberg—Hindenburg and Mackensen—it would have been short shrift for Myassoyedov, but for two circumstances. One, the Tzarina's orders and counter orders invariably backed up by the Tzar. Two, Grand Duke Nicholas's absolute refusal to allow "interrogation" of suspects. In the end, but only after months of wasted time and energy, besides the holding up of a dozen vital and important investigations, and loss of opportunity after opportunity to learn even more vitally important intelligence of enemy movements and intentions, the traitor was nailed to the cross.

That the mercenary prostitution of Myassoyedov's great gifts, his high estate and powers, was not anticipated and prevented, was due partly to the immunity he enjoyed through the Tzarina's protection (nothing less, as we now know, than her actual collaboration in his treachery); and partly to the enormous amount of work devolving upon the "White Branch" in those years between 1911 and 1914. One cannot be in two places at one and the same time.

However, the Tzarina's protection, never so wildly nor so indiscreetly exercised as during his trial, availed not at all to protect him. In fact, the greatest difficulties ever encountered by the White Branch under the Chief and myself, the most intensive efforts ever made before or afterward, were in the heroic task of saving the Tzarina from the rage of the disillusioned and despairing soldiery. Letters, messages, telegrams, passing between the Tzarina and German Agents, were intercepted, prevented, destroyed. Messengers of both sexes and both countries were arrested; in some cases shot, in others knouted to death or hanged. And in spite of everything the Tzarina's betrayal of the Russian people leaked out.

"The mills of the Gods grind . . . exceeding small!"

After his conviction and sentence, the manacled

traitor, Myassoyedov, was led out from the court and down the long corridor, on each side of which stood subordinate officers who had been, in one way and another, associated with him. Each of these struck him in the face, a light blow, as he passed. He was to be hanged on the morning of the seventh day; meanwhile he would be accorded whatever he wished in the way of food, drink, tobacco, and one hour before that set for execution of the court's sentence, a woman if he desired. This was immemorial custom and could not be abrogated even for a traitor.

There were hiatuses between the known facts in the man's operations, some of which it was imperative the Service should clear. I interrogated him verbally without the usual pressure. "Extreme interrogation" had been expressly forbidden by the Commander-in-Chief, a measure promulgated by him, not as a protection for traitors, but because it had long been his ambition to modify, if not to stamp out altogether, the excessive cruelties which were practiced in army as well as in civil procedure. Sensing, or having been secretly informed of his immunity from torture, the prisoner insolently refused to reply to my questions. The Service was again balked and this time by one whose loyalty was unqualified, whose wisdom was unquestioned,

whose character was unblemished, the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Armies in the Field!

Disarmed by this order, made helpless to gain information which was vital, not only to the Armies in the Field, but to the dynasty itself, I still had a weapon left. One which I can now affirm has never failed me when called upon as a last resort—woman. The prison authorities had been deluged by applications from women of rank and title for the privilege of "serving the state"—in plain language—offering themselves for Myassoyedov's satisfaction. I rejected them all with bitter comments, and sent for Op. C. 0041—A. A. F. (Princess G.) who was by this time one of our most competent and trusted operators. No longer the slender girl of my first acquaintance with her, but a beautiful woman, young, voluptuous, utterly depraved, a Lesbian of the extremest type, but, paradoxically, loyal. Loyal through fear. She was vividly alive, and desperately afraid of death. In addition she was abnormally sensitive to physical pain and shrank from torture with an almost insane terror. She was, of course, an agent provocateur of the Political Police, but her activities in behalf of the Service were carried on without their knowledge.

In anticipation of her arrival from Petrograd,

Myassoyedov's wine was drugged with ergotine. For forty-eight hours he was allowed no sleep. The prison guards, men of the ugliest type in Russia, sat in his cell and mocked him with the vilest epithets. At intervals of six to eight hours a convict was brought in from another cell and proceeded to soap Myassoyedov's neck in preparation for his hanging, using saliva to soften the hard brown soap. At the end of this time the prisoner's nerves were stretched to the snapping point. He was given a cold bath and left alone for an hour; then waked up and given more drugged wine; kept awake for another twelve hours; another cold bath and an hour's sleep. Then Princess G., Op. C. 0041 A. A. F., was introduced for an "interview" and the two left alone—save for a dictophone, with D-13 at the other end of the wires.

Given carte blanche as to method she soothed him with flattering messages from the Tzarina and promises of "opportunities for escape." Completely unnerved by his ordeal, he was by now in mental collapse. The hope of escape she held out seemed only to precipitate his breakdown. He raved, wept, cursed, denied his guilt, at the same time boasting of his friendship with the Tzarina and the German Kaiser. Princess G. pretended to doubt the latter, he became

emphatic, boasted of the Kaiser's confidence in him, gave names, dates, places, in corroboration; promised to show, after his escape, a voluminous correspondence with Ludendorf and Ehrenstein of the German Secret Service, besides a trunk full of notes from the Tzarina and a dozen other persons of the highest rank and title, who were in a league of treachery to the Empire. Still she was skeptical. He told her where these letters were hidden.

I wrote a telegram to the Chief, and had it sent off. Within an hour I had corroboration of Myassoyedov's boast. Among the names revealed by these documents, which our men found hidden in the altar of the Tzarina's private chapel, as actual or potential traitors, were those of the War Minister, General Sukhomlinov, the Petrograd Metropolitan Pitirim, General Voyeykov, Prince Nicholas Golitzin, Protopopov, Prince Lvov, Kultchitsky, Sturmer, Stcheglovitov, and among the women headed by the name Alix (the Tzarina) a list too long to record. Maggots gnawing at the heart of the nation already dead and putrifying, like a man with creeping gangrene!

While I waited for this confirmation of the miserable traitor's boast, Princess G. expressed the utmost admiration for him. She congratulated him on his

astuteness in the murder of our Austrian agent after the "Christ of the Steppes" affair. He laughed hysterically and denied the impeachment, then confirmed her surmise in detail, burst into tears, and proclaimed *himself* "The Christ of the Steppes." Again she expressed admiration coupled with doubt, and again he corroborated his assertion with names, dates, places. Cited the Moroccan incident of 1911, and Agadir, and boasted that the World War would have been precipitated at that time if he had succeeded in stirring the Ukraine to effective revolt.

The boast of a mad-man! Since corroborated in every detail! I gave an order. The "interview" was ended. Op. C. 0041 A. A. F. retired. The executioner entered the cell with two priests in black and a guard of Gendarmes. Myassoyedov's neck was again soaped and the black hood slipped over his head. Only then did he realize fully that he had been duped into confession and betrayal of his friends and associates! He was taken to the gallows fighting and screaming. And to the accompaniment of taunts and jeers of the prison guards was given a traitor's death.

Case: K3344—9695
File D-13: at. cpr. 1234 "S"

The Cross of the Pacifists

From a Letter of D-13
To Countess M. Ratzibor

EVIDENCE DEDUCED AT MYASSOYEDOV'S TRIAL, AND afterward, revealed a state of affairs in Moscow and Petrograd which spelled inevitable defeat for Russia unless the traitorous activities of the Tzarina and those who for one reason or another aided and abetted her were immediately curbed. Many of these traitors were, like the Tzarina herself, of too high rank or position to be punished except in the event of actual transactions with the enemy. But the pacifist organizations and subversive associations could be, if not eliminated, at any rate circumvented. To this end was organized a committee of one hundred, headed by the Chief and myself under Grand Duke Nicholas Nicolaevitch. Its personnel consisted, with the exception of His Highness the Grand Duke, entirely of Secret Service men of unqualified loyalty to the Empire. Its oath was brief and to the point. Three words: "The Empire First." Its duties: to battle against the dark forces scheming to disorganize the nation and break its power of resistance and its mighty democratic spirit, embodied in

the person of the Commander-in-Chief of the Turkish Front, Grand Duke Nicholas Nicolaevitch of Russia.

While Prussianism watched the very bricks of the Winter Palace, the entire government became a nest of graft, treason and open robbery. Political adventurers backed the increasing influence of the Baltic traitors in the Court, intensified the state of excitement which pervaded the country, and forestalled any effective action on the part of the Service. The Monomach Crown of All Russias lay beside an empty champagne bottle, the plaything of a morally corrupt, degenerate Siberian horse thief, the "Saint" Rasputin. Autocracy in the vomit of despair!

In peace, our greatest concern had been ever and forever the suppression of scandal in high places, such scandal being the meat and drink of the revolutionary organizations of one kind and another which infested the nation like vermin. In war, suppression of scandal had seemed of even greater importance. It wasn't. Suppression had become protection. Publicity was the only curb on such rats. Publicity, or the fear of publicity. On my part I determined to put into the hearts of every one of these defeatists such fear of the Service that he would scarcely dare speak to himself, or trust his reflection in the mirror. We were, of course, helpless against the Tzarina's "separate peace" tactics. She

was protected by the Tzar, who utterly refused to pay attention to evidence, no matter of what treasonable character, which involved any one of his immediate household. Rasputin held the royal family in the hollow of his hand. His attitude was a mystery. Every reasonable interest for his continued power pointed to his support of energetic measures toward the crushing of Germany and thus avoiding Prussian domination. Yet he led in the attempt to cut the arteries of the Russian nation. Rasputin out of the way, it might be possible to bring the Tzar to his senses. I proposed elimination of the monk as the first move of the Committee of One Hundred. The Chief agreed. Grand Duke Nicholas forbade it on the ground that "the moment was not opportune." The Tzar, he insisted, was not affected by the "separate peace" suggestions. Had in fact refused to listen to them. Was on the point of ordering more energetic measures for prosecution of the war, particularly on the eastern front. Anything which might distract him or seem to him like coercion would do more harm than good. The Grand Duke pointed out also that the moment was critical to the last degree, and therefore we could not risk an upheaval which might put in motion forces we had no means of controlling.

In retrospect it is plain that he was right. He fore-

saw more clearly, because intuitively, exactly the development which finally occurred: That is, the Tzar's insane desire to be revenged upon the entire nation for the actions of its truest patriots. At the time, however, our vision was clouded by our rage. The Grand Duke was over-ruled. He threatened to withdraw his support from the Committee. The Chief and I, as well as two-thirds of the rest, retaliated by a decision to join our regiments at the front. The Grand Duke yielded; only requiring that he be allowed to name the leaders of the plot against the monk, and that they be men outside the Committee of One Hundred. His purpose, he explained, was not because of greater confidence in his nominees or of less in us, but merely that the men be such as even the Tzar would not dare to punish. Also, it is now clear that he wished to gain time, since these leaders were not to be approached directly, but indirectly. After some discussion the condition was accepted and the Grand Duke wrote three names on a sheet of paper which he handed to the Chief, who read the names aloud. "Grand Duke Dimitri Pavlovitch, Prince Yussupov, M. Purichkevich."

The "execution" of Rasputin has been described by a half dozen or so of writers whose accounts more or less contradict one another. The facts are known only

to those who took part in the affair. The truth not even to them. If Grand Duke Nicholas' object was, in part at least, to gain time he was eminently successful. Events moved too fast for any of us. The task of organizing the plot and indirectly involving the Grand Duke's nominees in it was left to the Chief. The rest of us had each his assignment, mine being, first, the ferreting out of the associates of Myassoyedov and isolating their particular activities. These were to be dealt with as occasion warranted.

Premier Sturmer, a tool of reaction and a bootlicker *par excellence,* was, with the assistance of Protopopov, in complete control of the government. He was promoting the cause of a separate peace by every form of treachery his oblique mind could conceive. I interviewed Paul Milukov, a member of the Duma and the most powerful liberal of the moment. He undertook to rid us of Sturmer. A promise which he kept to the letter.

In the midst of these efforts we received a specific detail from the Chief of Staff of the Caucasian army, immediately following a secret memoranda from the Army Intelligence, forwarded through the War Department. The letter had been tampered with and some words changed. But with the assistance of 93

C. B., our chief chemist, I managed to restore the original message. As a result I was forced to drop everything and race off to Switzerland to watch, and if possible break up, the separate peace movements carried on by a group of German-Russian emigres financed by the Tzarina. In this connection I made a trip into Austria for a conference with one, Baron Sonenfeld, who was at that time attached to G. H. Q. of the German-Austrian Army on the Carpathian front. It was precisely like putting one's head into a lion's mouth—a hungry and angry lion. I had nothing for my protection except the knowledge of certain "indescretions"—a euphemism for treason, as a matter of fact—of the Baron, only a few months before the outbreak of war, "indiscretions" into which the Chief and I had led him for the express purpose of securing a hold over him. My object in seeing him now was to obtain information of one, Countess Borodin of Petrograd, who had recently become marked because of her over-bold pacifist propaganda among wounded Russian soldiers. I had no great difficulty in learning the Countess' whereabouts. She was in Berlin on a mission which involved General Von Palemberg, Military Branch of the German Secret Service. Berlin was at that moment nothing short of a death trap for such

as I. Recognition was certain death; and non-recognition almost, if not quite, the same thing, since an unknown face in Berlin was like an electric sign on a dark night. Nevertheless, I was compelled to the adventure. I "borrowed" Baron Sonenfeld's credentials. He had no choice but to lend, since in any event my apprehension would have been his death warrant. He made it his business to protect me from that danger, promising however to even the score if we both lived —a promise, by the way, which he very nearly succeeded in keeping. His credentials contained a photograph and a minute description of him. The description fitted me well enough; descriptions are vague things at best. The photograph I replaced with one of myself. The raging Baron instructed me whom to avoid and on the other hand whom I could safely approach without fear of detection. It was all very simple. Quite! As simple, precisely, as walking in bare feet on a loose wire over Niagara Falls, and without a balancing pole; with perhaps a gusty wind blowing from the west, at the same time with a sleet storm! Simple?

The difficulty lay not so much in effective disguise —appearance, language, manner—as in the imperative demand for the completely unconscious self-confidence

of the authentic person. This demand—the great difficulty of its accomplishment—has been the nemesis of more secret service men than any other single requirement. In matters of this extreme delicacy, when the merest quiver of an eyelash means betrayal and betrayal means the firing squad, or worse, a rope, consider the position of an operator, whose nerves are strung to the highest pitch, and who is at the same time called upon to appear relaxed and at ease. On top of this the importance of his assignment—that is to say, of success—and the disastrous consequences, not only to himself, but to his nation, if he fails. My individual manner of obviating these tricky betrayals was the judicious use of Bacardi. On such missions I took care to be just a bit "squiffy," a method which worked to double advantage for me, since those in the know accepted my condition as assumed, while the others found themselves less under the necessity of care for their own disguises of whatever kind.

My interview with the lovely Countess Borodin, in Von Palemberg's presence was not only a delightful respite from the alarums of war, but productive of information of the highest importance. She took me at my word, as did he, for my credentials were of course genuine, and gave me the names of the con-

spirators, the place of meeting and the terms on which Austria—camouflage for Germany—proposed to coöperate with these defeatists. The beautiful lady herself represented, she said, the Tzarina, and guaranteed the fulfillment of her undertaking with a list of seven hundred names of men and women, several of whom were actually in positions of power and influence: Protopopov, Manuilov, Pitirim, Golitzin, Sukhomlinov, Stecheglovitov, Kullchitsky, Voyeykov, Rennenkampf, . . . Princess Wasiltchikova, the latter a close intimate of the Tzarina, an intimacy described by the lovely Countess Borodin as "a spiritual union blessed by Gregory Rasputin, the moujik 'Saint'."

The names of Austria's negotiators were: Karachan, Stalin, Boucharin, Joffe. This fourth man was well known to me as N.O.O. 12. G. S., alias Judas, of the German Secret Service. It was from him in fact that I received the German Secret Service code after Tannenberg which enabled Rennenkampf to escape the fate he and his accomplices at the War Office had imposed upon Samsonov.

With this information in my possession my mission was accomplished. I returned Baron Sonenfeld's credentials to him at the Swiss border, and ten days later presented myself and my data to the Chief, in his

library in Petrograd. He smoked and swore lucidly. His own plans had gone forward. The conspiracy against Rasputin was on the point of maturing. The Tzar and the Tzarevitch would be at G. H. Q. in December. The opportunity would then be at hand. I nursed a mean *cafard,* drank pre-war vodka and made up my mind to become a patient in the "Sunshine Hospital," an institution donated to the nation by the Countess Borodin, and financed by a group of merchants, most of whom on investigation I decided would bear watching. It was only a "hunch" as they say, but I had the notion that this place was the H. Q. of the defeatist group. I called on Dr. Kartzoff in charge of Ward 11, "amnesia cases and dementia praecox." Two days later I was installed: Colonel Peter Sokoloff of the Siberian Rifles. Amnesia, shell shock and a hefty purse.

The first ten days were the hardest—on my skin. I was bathed by nurses, both professional and amateur, the latter consisting of society matrons, over-worked dowagers, war widows and neuresthenics generally. Flowers, books, chicken bouillon and friendly notes from my bathers! I fussed, fretted, sent back the notes unopened (?) and asked the chief nurse for my service .38. Convalescence. A crutch. Sunshine. Slender

feminine hands, and love. Prut! The game of love in a hospital is tinged with what the scientists call "war passion." Ether soaked bandages add an extra zest to submissive lips. Love? Bah!

Religion follows in the wake of passion. The ecstasy of love calls for the nails of the cross! I lay on my cot refusing to receive the usual quota of flower-burdened visitors, hands clenched over an amber rosary, lips forming the words of a prayer. There was a tiny chapel in the south wing of the hospital, a gloomy sound-haunted room, seldom used except for service of one kind "I am the resurrection and the life." Words dropped now and again by my visitors, and friends of the others about the wards, had got this chapel into my mind somehow. On the fifth day a certain Madam Virubova, of whom I had some knowledge, from previous experience, gave me my bath. I spoke reverently of the "Saint" Rasputin. Asked that he might visit me. The request was tabled, so to speak, but my shot had told. We talked "separate peace" quite openly. Two days later I received a basket of flowers and a perfumed note from the lady. I responded without reserve. In the end I was told that when I was sufficiently recovered I should receive an invitation to a midnight mass in the chapel of the

hospital. I asked questions, naïve questions, lacking originality, lacking indeed any interest in midnight masses, but which nevertheless elicited the information that these masses were conducted by Rasputin on Sundays of alternate weeks whenever the Tzarina was in Petrograd. At that time she was at Tzarskoye Selo. At the mention by this lady of the "Saint's" name my interest quickened. I uttered a tentative dislike of Grand Duke Nicholas Nicolaevitch. The result was beyond my most sanguine expectation. I was told that the army would soon be rid of his influence. The "Saint" had decided it for the good of the nation.

My recovery was nothing less than miraculous. A few hours later I was discharged, pronounced by Dr. Kartzoff, "fit for service at the front." I reported to the Chief. Together we inspected the chapel, a gloomy echo-haunted place with a mortuary connecting it with the hospital. The chapel yielded nothing. The mortuary, a large room draped with musty black curtains and smelling faintly of incense and that unmistakable stench of deodorants, turned out to be a storeroom for pacifist literature written by fools, and capable of convincing no one above the intellectual capacity of a rabbit. The Chief, however, drew my attention to a book which was fastened under the lid

of a metal coffin, its illuminated letters naming it the "Bible of Peace." It was bound in green Morocco and indented deeply at its silver-bound edges between which in the uncertain light the paper seemed to be tinted green. On the first page appeared the initials "A. R." The ink in which they were written was somewhat faded. A little less so was the line in red ink that was drawn through the initials "N. R. I." I counted seven hundred and twenty signatures: the polished filth of the camarilla written to the tune of German gold.

While the Chief examined the book a sheet of paper slipped from between its pages and fluttered to the floor. I picked it up. Typed in green was the date: "7th January" and after it "On the Cross," which was heavily underscored in ink. Below, in pencil in the Tzarina's hand, was the following:

"The Saviour has decided for the salvation of our beloved Empire.

A."

We took the "Bible" with us. The signatures were valuable, not only because they coincided exactly with Countess Borodin's list which I had seen in Berlin, but for corroborative evidence in the event of arrest or for charges of treason. In spite of this find however, we

had not progressed far. The date 7th of January was a puzzle. We discussed it and came to different conclusions. We were still discussing it when L. X. 11 of the Army Branch who had been sent to Austria and Germany to watch the movements of Countess Borodin, and whom we had given up for lost, was ushered in. He turned in a lengthy report, backed by a number of photographs.

Photograph: N. 17778-462-"4": "Countess B. accompanied by Captain Von H. of the German Secret Service military branch leaving Thiergarten Bureau after conference (?) with General Von L. and Prince W. N. date: November 25."

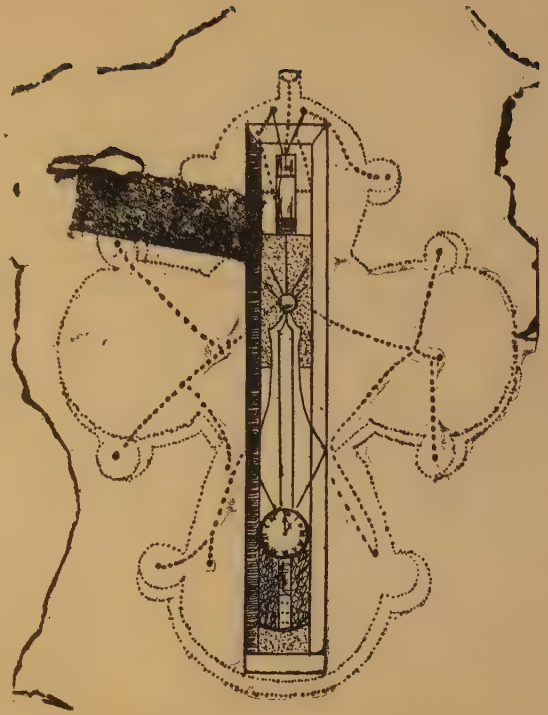
Photograph N. 3445-984-"I": "A portfolio of Russian leather sealed with the private seal of Baron F. of the Russian Imperial Court and marked: 'Nachrichten Bureau'."

Photograph: N. 3333-6542-"3" at. cpr. (enlarged): "A necklace of seven silver stars and a note written in a peculiar spidery hand to Countess B. 'We have answered your question'."

Photograph N. 00414-444-"9": "Countess B. delivering a package to X (unknown) in lobby of Hôtel Europe at Brest-Litovsk (border)."

I questioned L. X. 11 and studied his report. No

Courtesy of Count O. —— U. S. S. R.



Sketch of the Cross of the Pacifists, showing mechanism in the back which was loaded with T. N. T.

new leads. Nothing in fact to "pin the rose" on the Countess' backers—that is to say, nothing worth the stupendous scandal and inevitable conflict with the Tzar's deliberate protection of the leaders of this filthy business. To accomplish good instead of harm it was imperative that we lure these vermin into our net in such manner that their punishment—the firing squad—be a matter of routine and so not actually reported to His Majesty until after the event.

I was discouraged, tired, hopeless. The situation presented an impossible obstacle to further accomplishment. It began to look as if the Tzar's abdication would have to be forced. This I refused to consider as coming within my province. To me, and to the Chief, His Majesty was Russia. It had been dark all day, fitting my mood appropriately enough. The sun appearing at intervals, and then but bashfully, was soon smothered by snow clouds banking up to the north and west. With its final disappearance for the day, darkness set in earlier than usual, the snow clouds growing ever thicker and thicker. Flakes were beginning to fall, light scattering puffs of snow which the frosty wind whirled out and over the Neva like swarms of diamond bees.

The Chief grunted. I turned at the sound. He was

busily underscoring the word "January," letter by letter, and glancing at the photograph of the necklace of seven silver stars. I watched sleepily as he put down the letters and under each its corresponding number:

JANUARY
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Seven letters. Seven silver stars. His pencil poised in mid air, then came the familiar drawl: Seventh of January! *Nom d'une vache Russe!"*

I said *"Parfaitement,"* a bit grudgingly I confess.

He tapped the photograph, glowered at me and said, "We must have the necklace."

"Must?" I shrugged.

He was examining photograph N. 00414-444-"9" under a large magnifying glass. He pushed both toward me with a question "Who is the man X?"

I looked. We stared at each other. I said, "Of course." The Chief agreed.

Wires buzzed. I took up the photographs and retired to my own quarters. There I waited like a huge spider for the fly which was being driven into my net. A wait of scarcely more than two hours and my "fly" buzzed in. He came voluntarily, that is, without compulsion. He was smiling and seemed struck with the

solemnity of my demeanor; inquired its cause. I opened a drawer and produced a thick package of bank notes which I placed on the desk between us. Then I said:

"I was thinking of death; a solemn subject for the thoughts of any man."

He nodded, looked about the room curiously, as if with the intention of impressing it upon his memory. I sat back in my chair and watched him keenly. A man of middle age with thin almost bloodless lips, a ready smile, eyes veiled by half-open lids and long dark lashes. He lounged in his chair toying with an unlighted cigarette, oblivious apparently to my scrutiny. His eyes finally rested on the pile of bank notes on my desk. Indecision and greed balanced by years of espionage work followed one another across his dark face. But for his lounging manner and half-unconscious impudence there was a certain elegance about him which the casual observer would no doubt have taken as indicative of his entire character. No greater mistake could have been made. Although his greatest ambitions appeared to be to knot the perfect dress tie, attend a society ball or play dowager bridge, the real individual was one who had caused certain alterations in the secret code of an Eastern country. His were the

brains behind the Political Police, a fact which largely accounted for the vindictive and wholly unwarranted cruelty of their methods. Constant training had kept his well-knit muscular figure much the same as when I first knew him. The increase in years had but changed the qualifying adjective from "slim" to "gaunt." Save for the multitude of fine lines that criss-crossed his face he was the same gambler for high stakes that he had been ten years earlier and would be ten years hence.

The silence was becoming oppressive. I lighted a cigarette and offered him the match. He accepted with a wave of his hand and a smile. I turned the lamp full on the pile of bank notes. His eyes became sharp points of interrogation. I tossed the photograph of himself and Countess B. across the desk. He took it up, examined it, raised his eyebrows, smiled at me and shook his head. With a single movement I covered him with my service .38 and indicated the bank notes. The grandfather clock in the "English" corner of the room decided, after the usual wheezing and groans of the aged, to ding the hour of midnight. My visitor seemed genuinely unable to understand. "Is it the lady's name you wish?" he inquired, at the same time indicating the photograph.

I said, "Countess Borodin," and tossed him the photograph of the necklace of seven stars. His face changed. He breathed a suppressed, "Ah!"

I said: "My clock sounds the quarter hours. At the next quarter I shall press the trigger of this gun. Unless of course——"

He stopped me with a gesture, and in picturesque blasphemies denied any knowledge of such a necklace. I merely indicated the time, determined that, whether or not he were telling the truth, the necklace was the only thing on earth that could save him from death at my hands. He must have read my thoughts somehow, for he glanced at the muzzle of my pistol, then at the clock, and with a sort of desperate reluctance put a hand inside his coat and drew out a small package done up in green paper and sealed with red wax. I pushed the notes toward him. He placed the package on the desk. At the same time I opened a book bound in oilcloth and marked with a black skull—the "Book of the Betrayers."

At this he frowned. I said "Sign!" He took up a pen and signed his name, snatched the package of notes from the desk, and without another word or glance at me left the room.

Outside, the wind lashed in impotent fury against

the century old elms in the park. The clock dinged the quarter-hour—a chime of disdain. I stretched, blotted the signature, read it aloud:

"Manasewitch Manuilov"

and wrote under it "Secretary to Premier Sturmer. International swindler. During Russian-Japanese War served as Secret Agent of the Political Police. Accused of high treason. Charges withdrawn. Intimate friend of Gregory Rasputin."

I closed the book, washed my hands, had a nip of brandy, tore the green paper from the little velvet case and dumped the necklace of seven silver stars on the desk blotter. It was an exquisite piece of jewelry, each star set with a diamond and joined to its fellows by a fine chain of green gold. Examination indicated however that the stars were hollow. Slipping it into my pocket I sought the Chief's private office. In half an hour or so we had the stars all opened and the contents—seven tightly folded squares of very thin paper about the size of a large postage stamp—spread out on a flimsy. They were apparently blank but a simple test revealed that they had been given a bath of hyposulphate or ammonia with a solution of metallic salts.

Our chief chemist 93 C.D. had quite a job on his hands, and smelled like a skunk when he emerged

from my "lab" with the result of his scientific labors. The code messages on the seven squares of paper were now plainly visible under the magnifying glass. It was pretty close to a certainty that a message or messages of this character would be in a "climbing" code—that is, a code which changed its key for each square of paper. And yet each key interlocked with its fellow. This is the most effective code form, because of the enormous difficulty in discovering the interlocking relation of one key with another.

Due credit must be given our decipherer L. X. 11 who, using his nimble wits, found this interlocking relation within forty-eight hours—a record time. The rest was comparatively easy. In the end the messages, there were three, were decoded.

The first or "White Message" was evidently for use as propaganda, since it was not addressed to any particular person. It was a transcript of an authentic letter written by Grand Duke Nicholas Michailovitch to the Tzar, in an effort to bring the true situation—that is the treasonable activities of the Tzarina, Rasputin and the camarilla—to his attention. The transcript contained in this "White Message" was doctored in such a way that the purport of the letter was reversed. The letter follows. The alterations are italicized:

"You have frequently proclaimed your will to continue the war to a victorious end. Are you sure that the present condition of the country permits this? Do you hear the whole truth or is much concealed? Where is the root of the evil? *Your first impulses and decisions are always remarkably true and to the point. You believe in Alexandra Feodorovna. Do not allow anything to introduce doubt in your mind that she is your safest guide. When the time comes and it is not far distant you can yourself proclaim from the throne the skilful machinations of your enemies against your beloved wife. But now you must understand the whole truth which I have long hesitated to tell you. A Separate Peace for Russia.*"

The second, or "Red Message," was addressed to Admiral K. of the Black Sea Fleet.

"You will receive your final instructions on the day of the 'Winter Saint.' The Russian alphabet however is not complete. The letters A.B.R.E.D.O. and P. are still missing. Prince D.S. will undertake the necessary adjustments in the near future."

The third, or "Yellow Message," was addressed to Col. Von F. of the Hussars.

"You will receive a gold crucifix through the medium of a friend. Make presentation on January 7th."

The Chief produced the magnifying glass, wiped it with medicated cotton and pushed it across a pile of

flimsies which littered his desk. I studied the enlarged photographs of the messages. Every message was signed with the well-known monogram of General Von Falkenhayn.

Now to puzzle out these messages—their purport, that is. The first was obvious: Mere propaganda. A useful argument when Grand Duke Nicholas Michailovitch's public utterances were referred to; and, also, a defense of the Tzarina's "separate peace" activities. The second however addressed to the Admiral K—— of the Black Sea Fleet, was more difficult. "The Russian alphabet . . . not complete. The letters A.B.R.E.D.O. and P. are still missing." The Chief's extraordinary powers of hypothetical reasoning soon deciphered it. His suggestion was that these letters were initials of persons important to the success of the undertaking, whatever it might be, and who had not yet yielded to pressure. The correctness of this guess was apparent the moment we surveyed the possibilities. Names fitted like stoppers into bottles.

The third message balked us completely. "You will receive a gold crucifix. . . . Make presentation on January 7th." We looked up Col. Von F. of the Hussars. He was Russian born, son of a German father and Austrian mother. We concentrated upon Col. F.

With much difficulty I discovered that he was not with his regiment but was serving in a Staff capacity at G. H. Q. I made a journey; found Col. F. at his quarters, well guarded by a sentry and an orderly. I sent in my name, "Baron von der Plaunitz." I was admitted. Col. F., a tall, spare young man with dark skin and a forbidding manner, demanded my business. I delivered the message verbally, "You will receive a gold crucifix through the medium of a friend. Make the presentation on January 7th."

He was startled and said, in German, "The password."

I produced an order for his arrest, signed by Grand Duke Nicholas Nicolaevitch. I said: "You have an alternative."

Color crept back into his dark cheeks. I continued: "Full confession. Every detail. Names and proofs."

He sprang toward the table which stood between us and on which his sword and service pistol lay. At the same moment I whirled a chair and swept the table top clean. Col. F. swore, shrugged, laughed a little shakily and as I opened my lips to speak, his hand flew to his mouth. He swallowed twice. Vaulting the table I caught him as he fell, and driving my knees hard into his stomach, pried open his jaws and stuck the

handle of a paper cutter down his throat. Too late! There was no response from the throat muscles. Five minutes later an army surgeon pronounced him dead.

The Provost Marshal ordered my arrest. I was shut up in a small room in the basement of a house where I was kept incommunicado. I managed however to induce my jailer, a timid soul, to forward a code telegram to the Chief. Three hours later I was released by an order signed by His Majesty. At the same time I was handed a telegram from the Chief which read as follows:

"Served you right. Tortoises win only in fables."

I was furious but soon enough forgot the rebuke in the desperate effort to keep the death of Col. F. from reaching the military liaison and the press censor—my only hope of preventing his accomplices from escaping the net we were spreading and covering up their tracks. Next I went through Col. F.'s papers, but discovered nothing of importance. It was my intention to obtain His Majesty's permission to impersonate the dead officer and perhaps receive the crucifix myself. In this way I might discover the plot. But just as I was on the point of seeking an audience I received another telegram from the Chief demanding my immediate

presence in Petrograd. I started within the hour, and traveling by train, motor and airplane reached the Chief's office in exactly twenty-eight hours and four minutes.

He welcomed me with a laugh, and while I ate the first decent meal I had had since leaving him, ragged me on my arrest and imprisonment. When I was sufficiently regaled and in a mood for business, he told me that the Countess Borodin was at Tzarskoye Selo with the Empress, and in view of my former contact with the lady, he wished me to take over the matter of her apprehension and "interrogation." A task I shrank from with every nerve on edge.

Fate—the mills of the gods—accident—who knows? decreed that the next time I was to see the beautiful Countess Borodin should be under yet more trying circumstances than those I shrank from. Even while we talked, the Chief and I, a sentry ushered in a messenger from the Ministry of War with a letter which had been addressed to Examining Magistrate Extraordinary Orlinsky. In the absence of that official it was sent on to the Chief. The receipt was signed by op. L. X. 11, countersigned by D-13, File N0004-3496-2-at. opr. official N-164.464.-34 "7" (Ministry of War). The

letter in an uneven, but obviously cultivated hand, read:

"I was a man to whom God forgot to give a conscience. As for my country and my salvation, who cares? You will find the missing letters of the Russian alphabet A.B.R.E.D.O. and P. in the files of the War Ministry. Pacifists wearing the uniforms of proud regiments. Traitors shielded by the glorious name of the Russian Army. I suggest drastic measures in connection with fronts of Germany, Austria and Eastern Turkey. Admiral K. of the Black Sea Fleet has fortunately changed his mind. The guns will be silent on the 7th of January. I have taken the liberty of inviting the charming Countess B. to picnic with me in the woods southwest of the town of Kronstadt, where you will find our bodies. For the honor of Russia! Handle gold crucifix with extreme care. Invite your bomb expert. You will need him. No separate peace for Russia! Not through the death of the soldier-Commander of the Turkish front. Not by the hand of the Countess B.

Corps X"

After a short search the Chief and I, accompanied by C.0005-X-3 our bomb expert, found the bodies. The Countess had been shot through the heart. She lay full length on her back, her hands crossed on her breast which was bare, the clothing having been torn

away. Under her fingers was a gold crucifix studded with rubies and opals which covered the initial letter of the word traitor cut deep in the flesh. The same letter was smeared in blood on her forehead.

The man also was on his back, his face disfigured by powder marks from the army revolver which he had evidently held close to his forehead between his eyes. He was unknown to us. There were no identifying marks on his clothing and no papers were found. The Chief stooped and pinned on the man's coat an order torn from his own uniform. Military honors to a patriot!

We covered the bodies with robes from my motor car, then stood smoking and talking. The ambulance arrived, clanging. The bodies disappeared into its dark interior. I handed the crucifix to our bomb expert, he twisted a wire, jerked a tiny capsule with practiced fingers, and was violently sick.

I examined the emblem of Christianity which bore an inscription as follows:

"To the Soldier-Commander of the Turkish Front,
Grand Duke Nicholas Nicolaevitch
Peace"

The Chief pointed to a date engraved on the reverse: "January 7th, 1916."

On the way back to Petrograd we, the Chief and I, decided the time had come to strike and to punish. We had got rid of Sturmer, only to be saddled with worse. The whole current of affairs set always one way—toward reactionism. Rasputin, the ex-horse thief, still ruled the Empire.

The Committee of One Hundred met at the house of the Chief. The matter was thrashed out. Methods were discussed and agreed upon. The principals were notified. All provisions including the "bait" were forthcoming. There remained only the necessity for the victim's consent to walk into the trap. After four abortive attempts to induce him to accept invitations, he finally yielded to an earnest request to sup at the house of the young Prince Youssupoff. The company promised him was to be a distinguished one and the Princess G. was to be there for his special entertainment. The Chief picked fifty of our best men and stationed them at strategic points along the approach to the Prince's house. In the uniform of a gendarme, I waited a hundred yards or so from the entrance; the Chief, in military uniform of a private, the same distance on the other side. Our men blocked every

approach from any direction. Finally the monk came, passing through this formidable cordon without apparently discovering it. He entered the gate. The Chief and I closed in.

Time stood still!

Then a shot. Another interminable wait. Two more shots. The "soldier" and "policeman," of so many stories of that much-written about event, demanded to know the meaning of the shots. We were told a dog had been killed. We agreed and suggested a dog's burial—the icy waters of the Neva. Then we were informed of the dog's name. We murmured pious and patriotic prayers, helped to wrap the carcass in its own heavy fur coat and place it in a motor car.

Then we went home, ate a hearty breakfast, and congratulated ourselves on the Tzar's manifesto of a few days ago, and on our own great accomplishments —never for an instant dreaming that what we had accomplished was nothing less than the final act in the drama of a house already sufficiently divided against itself, and which would now be riven asunder—by the very person who had most to lose!

"The mills of the gods——"

Odessa : 1919

From a Letter of D-13
To General N. von Kragenau

"NEW YORK TIMES CURRENT HISTORY," VOLUME APRIL-June, 1919. Page 265 reads a.f.

"A critical state of affairs had developed at Odessa, where British and French detachments had been landed soon after the Turkish armistice. Kherson, ninety-two miles northeast of Odessa, had been reported on February 26, to be occupied by Greek troops; the city, however, was captured on March 8 by Ukranian Soviet forces. The city of Zhitomir was occupied by Soviet troops on March 14. The position of Odessa was made more precarious by these events. Mixed detachments of White Guards, consisting of partisans of General Denikin and General Petliura, were making great efforts to defend the approaches to the city for the purpose of covering the allied line of retreat if evacuation became necessary. Lack of food in Odessa was the chief difficulty faced by the allied forces there.

"According to statements made by the War Secretary in the House of Commons on March 26, events of the last few months had been disastrous for the French in the Ukraine. Entering from the south, they had gone some distance from the coast, had met with superior enemy forces and encountered hostility from the people. Kherson

and Nikolaiev, however, had been taken. (At Nikolaiev, it was reported on March 20, the Bolsheviki had lost from 5,000 to 8,000 men, but had forced the French garrison to withdraw to Odessa by sea.) . . .

"The Russian Soviet communiqué on March 25 declared that the Bolshevist vanguards were close upon the suburbs of Odessa. On April 6 it was reported that allied evacuation was imminent, and that the Perekop Isthmus connecting European Russia with the Crimea had been fortified to protect Sebastopol. The accuracy of the forecast was proved on April 9 when the rumor that Odessa had fallen was confirmed officially. The allied forces at Odessa, which numbered approximately 50,000 men, including three French regiments, three Greek regiments and a Rumanian contingent, had retired to Rumania and Constantinople. . . ."

All the data in this report are correct in fact, but the truth is scarcely touched upon. It is a fact that "British and French detachments had been landed soon after the Turkish Armistice." Also that "Kherson, ninety-two miles northeast of Odessa had been reported on February 26 to be occupied by Greek troops." Reported, yes, but the report was not true. The occupation was by a contingent under General Petlura. The city was not "Captured" on March 8 by Ukranian Soviet forces, because Petlura's forces had withdrawn from Kherson on March 2nd to Nikolaiev. When the

Soviet Troops occupied Kherson, is known only to themselves. As to Zhitomir, I don't know. The position of Odessa was not desperate at that time, however—or perhaps it is nearer the truth to say "need not have been desperate" since the French were at Ananiev in force. With detachments at both Vosnescensk to the East and Tiraspol to the South and West, and in and near Odessa were French, Greek, British and Russian forces.

The "Statements made by the War Secretary in the House of Commons (England) on March 26," to the effect that "Events of the last few months had been distastrous for the French in the Ukraine . . . (they) had met with superior forces and encountered hostility from the people." . . . Fact, yes, but not truth. The "Superior forces" were products of imagination, pure and simple, though no doubt utterly sincere. That is to say, it is close to a certainty that the commanders of both contingents were sincerely convinced of the truth of reports to the effect that large forces of Soviet Troops were advancing from the north and east.

Now for Nikolaiev—Yes "the Bolsheviki lost from five to eight thousand men," probably twice that number, since the French, withdrawing in a kind of panic from Vosnescensk, found themselves, as they imagined,

cut off by the Soviet troops to the south. These troops which had been sent up from Kherson had apparently missed their way, or through misunderstood orders, had overshot Nikolaiev. The force, numbering some thirty thousand all told, met the French, who fought like madmen, twelve miles north of the town and were driven back upon Petlura's irregulars advancing from the south. The Soviet force was cut to pieces and fled in disorder, while the French, their worst fears realized, continued helter-skelter toward Odessa. Hence the misstatement by the British War Secretary that the French Garrison (of Nikolaiev) had been "forced" to withdraw to Odessa.

The rest is true enough except for a few interesting details. As for myself, a man hunted, a price on his head, after two years of fighting, dodging the tentacles of the Tcheka—nights and days fringed with horror—I entered Nikolaiev "escorting" a freight train loaded with ammunition, and found the city in the hands of Simon Petlura, the peasant general of the Ukranian army—a heterogeneous collection of vagabonds, cutthroats, jail scum—officered by the refuse of the Kieff brothels.

I shaved, ate, slept . . . burnt my verminous shirt and bought a French uniform and a straw hat from

a drunken deserter, a Greek soldier with a bloody bandage over his head.

Nikolaiev sheltered obligingly Bolshevik spies, Hetman Scoropadsky's militia in gaudy uniforms, refugees from Central Russia, German and Austrian officers, and the general riff-raff of a seaport town.

Hungry and desperate I loafed on the shell-torn streets, visited the empty cafés, listened to current rumors, and at night shared the dingy room of a kindly prostitute.

Deserted by the French, the comical, yet bravely fighting Ukranian "army" slowly retreated before the advancing Reds. Nikolaiev struggled for a day or two. A British warship anchored at the "Old Port," smashed a few shells into a Bolshevist armored train, "October Revolution" by name, watched it travel skyward in cascades of orange-purple flames, and steamed away.

The doomed town dripped red. Red stars on the conical helmets of the Bolshevik officers mingled with the melon-pink uniforms of the "Chinese Guards," the executioners of the *Tcheka.*

I made some changes in my appearance, found a brand new .38, a box of cartridges, and "borrowed" a steel-gray Bentz with a seven-pointed star on the hood.

There was an occupant, a fat oily Kirghiz soldier with drug-twisted lips and dead sunken eyes. He was smoking a cigar, a bourgeois cigar, which was slowly burning between his pudgy fingers adorned with cheap silver rings. I could have strangled him easily, twisted his neck with a slow, circular movement of the hands, or simply knifed him in the belly. Instead I rammed the cigar between his carmined lips and hurled him out of the car. He spouted flames and Kirghiz profanity. The powerful machine picked up speed as I jammed down the accelerator with my bare feet. A sniper, posted on the roof of the National Club, smashed the windshield with a lucky shot, bits of flying glass grazing my cheek. I fired, yelled: *"Atrape ça bobo!"* grinned savagely through clenched teeth. The sniper's body struck the pavement in front of my car, the arms raised in a grim salute as I rode over him with hate in my heart. A machine gun coughed and stuttered, a bullet pinged through the brim of my straw hat, and then the car skidded into a back street and safety. On my way to Odessa I stopped once, mocked my raw nerves and braked hard. Three vagabonds hung over the naked body of a screaming girl, wrists tied, the eyes empty slits of congealed blood. My .38 cracked four times. Vengeance

and mercy blending in four sharp reports! I drove on.

A Senegalese patrol came dog-trotting over the dusty highway, the bayonets gleaming red in the setting sun. I jerked the wheel, applied the brakes and shouted *"cognac!"* The young officer in command noticed the silent group behind me, sprawling in the shadows of a brownish-gray haystack. . . . He retched terribly, face pea-green, hands vainly trying to steady the monocle in his eye, and handed me a flask.

I drank greedily, spilling the fiery liquid over my uniform. The sar-major, a giant Senegalese barked *"pas bon,"* lighted a cigarette, spat viciously, then added in a friendly tone *"toi, moi, Odessa-a."*

Odessa, official be-ribboned Odessa, danced, indulged in super patriotic speeches, courted the Allies, gambled, drank—mostly drank. The Jewish population wailed, prayed and starved; the Russian, starved silently, there really being no earthly difference. In both cases the end was the same—a sack and a hastily dug hole.

The Commander-in-Chief of the Odessa Garrison, General Grishin-Almazoff, a moral imbecile with the eyes of a martyr and the *camaraderie* of a truck driver, greeted me with an embrace, struck my name from the civilian register, marking in blue pencil,

"Army Intelligence." My appointment as Assistant Chief of the A. I. C. followed within the next few days.

My immediate superior, Colonel L.—ex of the Political Police—received the news of my appointment with a sarcastic comment "*encore un voleur!*" However we became fast friends. He drank, I worked. Not that I expected to accomplish much with nothing but a handful of lily-handed, medal-bedecked ex-staff officers at my disposal, and the "special informants," recruited among the inhabitants of the slums; jail birds and drug addicts. However, by slaving forty-eight hours a day I inaugurated a liaison service with the French and British zones in the territory of the port, transferring work to the "Special Branch" under the jurisdiction of Examining Magistrate U., a very capable man.

At first, things worked smoothly. The drinking and gambling dens closed their doors and the number of "intoxication arrests" dwindled to a negligible quantity. Then, due to some changes in the military tactics north-west of Kherson, and the necessity of fortifying the Perekop Isthmus, Odessa received three regiments of General Denekin's White Guards, my work came to an inglorious end, smothered under the champagne bottles which the "war-strung heroes"

opened by the dozen in the restaurant of the Hotel du Nord, the temporary headquarters of General Denekin's Volunteer Army. Drinking and gambling started afresh with incidental Jewish pograms, the direct result of General Grishin-Almazoff's "The stink of a Jew shall not offend our nostrils."

Printed copies of the so-called "Protocols of Zion," accusing the Jews and the Masons of a gigantic plot to rule Russia through the Red movement, were freely circulated among the Volunteer Army. Examining Magistrate U. personally arrested a group of officers and enlisted men of the Dragoons (Hell's Squad) in the very act of distributing the pamphlets in the territory of the French "zone," the port district and the slums, the most susceptible quarter of the city. I examined the charges against the officers, Major-General Prince S. G., Colonel G., Captain S. and Lieutenant P., and found the evidence overwhelming. In fact, the depositions of the prisoners disclosed a thinly veiled animosity against the Allies. Further investigations necessary for the preservation of the morale of the Volunteer Army, were however curtailed through an order issued by the Chief-of-Staff of General Denekin's White Guards, a man suffering from the *hantise* of the allied occupation of South Russia. The allied oc-

cupation had accomplished less than nothing of its purported intention, since it was months too late and conducted, oddly enough, on typical Russian lines—that is to say complete disregard of individual rights of any kind, and in addition a ruthless policy of punishment for anything and nothing. A fear complex of the most pronounced sort; attributable, shall we say, to a too long, a too intense exposure to the psychologically disintegrating effects of the Western Front? That is, of course, by way of being polite. Whatever its origin, its effect was to create a house divided against itself.

In Odessa the consequences of this lack of coöperation among the Allies was that spies, murderers, traitors, blackmailers, and ordinary thieves throve and multiplied. Associations such as the "White Blue and Red Organization" of Odessa, a camouflaged shadow, filial of the German Nachrichten Bureau, sprang up like mushrooms in a damp meadow. One of these associations, headed by a German merchant named Steuben, alias Korzikoff, spread false rumors directed against the French Army of the Orient and the Consul General of the Republic (two giants fighting wholeheartedly against the Red menace), and in some wholly

unexplainable manner caused a hasty evacuation by the French, of Ochakov, the key to Odessa.

With the greatest difficulty I managed to arrest and imprison Herr Steuben, who immediately "escaped"—with the connivance of his accomplice, an ex-officer of the Russian Political Police, on the staff of the Commander-in-Chief of the Odessa Garrison, General Grishin-Almazoff. I saw now where my goal lay. At any rate, I suspected. I would put the Commander-in-Chief under the microscope. To this end I began the reorganization of the Army Intelligence, sent a detailed report of existing conditions, with a recommendation for a more systematized coöperation with the Allied commanders, addressed to the Commander-in-Chief of the Odessa Garrison. A week, ten days later, the official reply arrived—a single word in French: *"Betise."*

This confirmed my suspicions. I determined that if I had not the strength to save Odessa from treason at least I would have enough to punish the traitor. I sounded the Allied commanders severally, but without satisfaction. Theirs was obviously a waiting game—waiting only for the opportunity to retire from the hopeless task. The attitude of the rank and file may

be expressed without qualification by quoting the answer of a young British officer, when appealed to by a Russian officer of superior rank:

"Go back to your prostitutes; we work, while you . . . drink."

In spite of this attitude I persisted, and with a tenacity reinforced by an inescapable loyalty to Russia's former allies, continued to struggle for some semblance of coöperation. Hoping against hope, drugging my clear vision of realities with a kind of "never say die" philosophy, borrowed from my youthful experiences in England, I strove to protect Denekin against his own incredible folly. In this wasted effort I allied myself with a certain Mlle. K., who had been an intimate friend of General Grishin-Almazoff. Gradually winning her confidence and finally posing as a Bolshevik spy, I obtained from her copies of the secret lists of regiments and Ukranian units operating outside the allied zone, beside accurate data giving exact positions of all anti-Bolshevist forces. Recognizing at once that I had been too late to prevent duplicate lists from reaching the commander of the Red army in the Caucasus, nevertheless I was in time to warn Denekin.

In a hastily summoned Court-Martial, Mlle. K. was tried with her accomplice, an Aide-de-Camp to the

Chief of the Army Intelligence, who faced the firing squad with a cynical remark, and himself gave the order to fire. But Mlle. K. brazenly defied the judge. Her perfect *"Je m'en fous!"* was well worth the time spent in court. So was the verdict—"Not guilty."

The press openly rejoiced—a reptile press of the yellow variety, financed from Moscow. Censorship was useless and served only to encourage the inborn Slavic trend—"Martyrdom-to-save-my-soul," expressed in wholesale criticism of the Allies.

An episode which inflamed local public opinion against the Franco-British troops, was the printing of a cleverly faked letter, supposedly written by Captain S., who represented the "International Communists" in the Moscow Soviet. Three savagely barking pages of this ponderous missive were addressed to the "Glorious Workers of Odessa." The author threatened the Unions with death and annihilation should they continue to shoulder the burden of militarism. As a result, all work in the port was conducted under the constant menace of street riots; a winning card in the hands of the lurking Reds.

The rapidly rising cost of living, accompanied by store looting, daylight-robberies, bomb throwing, and bank hold-ups, were featured by the press in a special

black-framed page; every word a firebrand, every phrase an insult to the Allies. Painstakingly I corrected the swashbuckling editorials, limited the printing of indignant "fellow citizen" letters, erased sulphuric lines, and muzzled "war correspondents" by offering them a free passage to the "trenches" outside the allied zone. In other words, the military prison.

The dissatisfaction of the masses reached a high pitch; riots and strikes broke out here and there. Thousands of refugees from Central Russia, the failing morale of the Volunteer Army, the acute food question, the treason in high military circles, the dark and portentous rumors. All these elements created an oppressive atmosphere. The leaders of public opinion, stirred by my frantic appeals, exerted all their energies to restrain the popular discontent. Exhortations were addressed to all parties by their respective chiefs; the clergy vainly fought against the vicious circle of ever-increasing Jewish pogroms.

In these nightmare circumstances it was easy for a journalist with a glib tongue to gain access to the Headquarters of the Volunteer Army, and become there a powerful influence.

I hate descriptions, and yet Aaron Zinovieff, the journalist, is worth describing. A face, the color of an

unripe tomato; liquid, gray eyes under swollen lids; a bald and pimply head; stumps of decaying teeth, and fat "friendly" hands. A slow, creeping voice, tinged with that oily suavity which often passes for hidden power; a bastard Judas Iscariot stamped with the mark of political prostitution. His language oscillated between the stock-in-trade patter and "patriotic" screechings, intermingled with the foulest vocabulary of the slums and the underworld. His influence over General Grishin-Almazoff, was greatly enhanced by his absolute gift in wielding a pen—pictures of victory, sweetened with future drunken rest.

Armed with an official pass which entitled him to a special staff train, he visited the Ukranian regiments southwest of the Perekop Isthmus and the Black Sea, and returned surrounded by a pall of mystery. In the space of a week the population of Odessa was suddenly treated to the most bewildering piece of news of the month. General M. of the Guards, a man known for his pro-Ally sentiments, was appointed at the head of the commission in charge of the food supply for the Ukranian Army! For a moment it seemed that a new wind had begun to blow in the high spheres. It was thought that internal reforms were finally to be granted, the chaotic food problem solved, and the

social organizations aided in their patriotic labors in the cause of national defense.

Disillusion was quick to follow. General M. was removed under charges and Aaron Zinovieff, "The Patriot with the Bleeding Heart," had been appointed president of the "Ukranian Supply Committee" in his stead.

Aaron's first steps were to affiliate himself with a group of "Bankers" who bought all available food supplies in the neighborhod of Odessa and took care of their "reasonable distribution." An emergency regulation obviously intended to paralyze, not only the Odessa food market, but also the Ukranian army. Protests forced from the incensed commanders of the French and British troops were unavailing. Aaron proceeded with his plans, backed by the rifles of the White Guard, with the result that the Ukranian front was almost immediately starved and the citizens of Odessa were treated to the war-time spectacle of units from this army marching through the city waving red flags. Aaron Zinovieff frightened at last, ordered out the guards. Machine guns crackled. The bodies of the Ukranian "traitors" disappeared under the chalky clay. Mlle. K. dragged me around the corner of a building just in time to save me from a fusillade of

shots aimed, not at me, but at a straggling band of Denekin's starved wretches. She was badly frightened and pleaded for my assistance in immediate flight. When I refused it, she plead with me to save myself. I questioned her. Why did she imagine Odessa today less safe than yesterday? She answered: "Because Odessa was sold last night!"

"Ah! by whom? To whom?"

"By General Grishin-Almazoff, Commander-In-Chief of the Odessa Garrison; to Vladimir Lenin and the U.S.S.R. Price two million gold roubles. Place of sale Kieff, S.R. date April 2nd 1919."

I demanded proof. She could give no details. Her information had come from a young aide, Lieutenant Von Breun, who had arrived by motor car from Kieff only two hours ago. He had brought with him two bags of gold which he had taken to her lodgings in preparation for their flight at midnight. General Grishin-Almazoff would arrive at dawn, he told her. Meanwhile, they—young Von Breun and Mlle. K.—could be half way to the Roumanian coast in a cabin motor boat he had already hidden in the Bay.

She had agreed to meet him at the wharves at eleven o'clock. He left her, and on reaching the street was shot dead by a patrol of White Guards, whether in

mistake or by Grishin-Almazoff's orders she had no means of knowing. She had fled by a back way, and dared not go back to her lodgings.

I changed my mind and sent one of my men to search for the hidden motor boat. Then taking Mlle. K. to my rooms I left her and went myself in search of the gold. At Mlle. K's. apartment, which I entered by the back way. I found the bags intact. Evidently the assassins of Von Breun had not been aware of the fortune. I had no time however to investigate the murder. Placing the gold in a large market basket, with my coat thrown across the top, I carried it out to my car. It was a precious find, and I was prepared to defend it with my life. This was not necessary, however. My man had discovered the motor boat a mile and a half down the bay, and brought it to the French wharves, where he had secured permission to leave it. I went immediately, taking Mlle. K. with me. We placed the gold aboard the boat. I sought the French Commandant, and told him of the uncorroborated rumors of the betrayal of Odessa. He thanked me. We shook hands and parted—friends. Then I went in search of Aaron Zinovieff.

What, you may ask, is the death of a single man, when held against the background of millions

butchered, tortured crushed under the heels of stupidity, hatred, cruelty, greed, treachery—?

And yet it gives me a definite pleasure to recall the death of Aaron Zinovieff under the lash of a heavy dog whip, presented to me by the commander of the French Forces in Odessa.

APR 23 1932